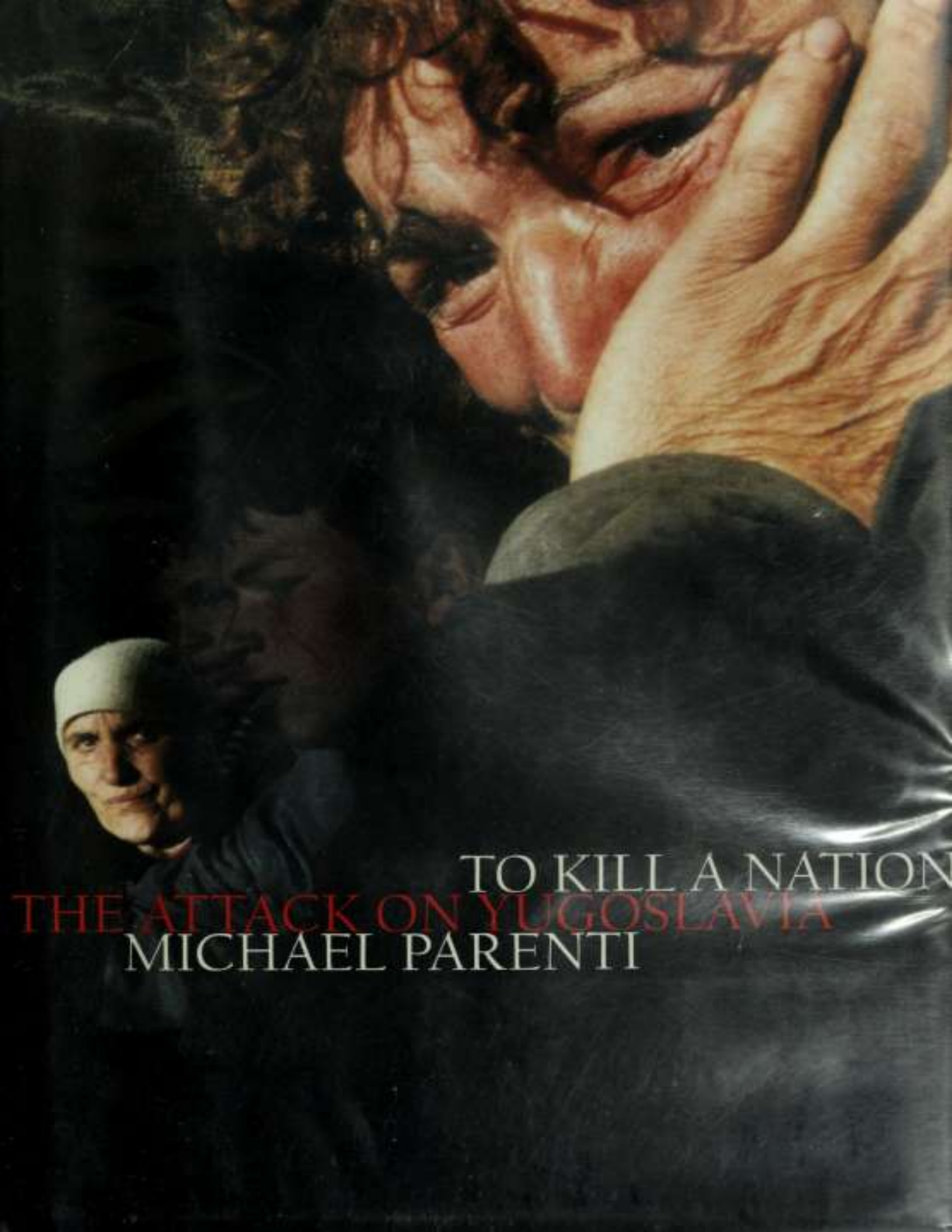

TO KILL A NATION

THE ATTACK ON YUGOSLAVIA

MICHAEL PARENTI

TO KILL A NATION

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TO KILL A NATION

The Attack on Yugoslavia

MICHAEL PARENTI

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To the peoples of the former Yugoslavia with the hope that they may be allowed to live in peace with justice.

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Introduction: Whom Do We Believe?

This book deals with the lies our leaders have been telling us for more than a decade about events in the former Yugoslavia, and how these events fit into the broader context of US global policy. In the pages ahead I investigate the conflicts leading to the dismemberment of that country, and the interests motivating US leaders and their NATO allies.

I am not one of those critics who think that Western policy vis-à-vis Yugoslavia has been misdirected or confused. Top policy makers are

intelligent, resourceful, and generally more aware of what they are doing than those who see them as foolish and bungling. US policy is not filled with contradictions and inconsistencies. It has performed brilliantly and steadily in the service of those who own most of the world and who want to own all of it. That some critics may not know what policy makers are doing does not mean the policy makers themselves do not know what they are doing. That Western leaders make misleading statements about their goals and intentions does not denote confusion on their part but a desire to confuse their publics as to what interests they are really serving. That they are misleading others does not mean that they are themselves misled, although of course there are times when they make mistakes and suffer bafflement in regard to tactics and timing.

But seldom are they confused about their opposition to socialism, and their dedication to free-market globalization and what they euphemistically call democratic reforms. In the last decade or so, they have become more open about the powerful economic interests behind their pursuit of "democracy." And whenever democracy actually begins to work too well, whenever it begins to thwart or limit the neoliberal free-market agenda rather than act as its legitimating cloak, their dedication readily shifts from free-market democracy to free-market autocracy.

I will argue that Western intervention in Yugoslavia has not been benign but ruthlessly selfish, not confused but well directed, given the interests that the interventionists serve. The motive behind the intervention was not NATO's new-found humanitarianism but a desire to put Yugoslavia—along with every other country—under the suzerainty of free-market globalization. I am not the only one who sees the conflict this way; the decision-makers themselves do too. As I will show, they have been far more concerned about privatization and neoliberal "reforms" (rollbacks) than about the well-being of the various Yugoslav peoples.

Western leaders talk of peace, and perpetrate merciless wars. They call for democracy while supporting ex-Nazis and fostering despotic intercessions. They hail self-determination while exercising coercive colonial rule over other peoples. They denounce ethnic cleansing while

practicing it themselves. This is what I shall attempt to demonstrate in the pages ahead.

Much of the debate about the Yugoslav conflict revolves around questions like: Whom do we believe? What sources do we rely on? Is it the free and independent Western media or Belgrade's government-controlled press? I would answer as follows: The US media, as with most of the news media in other Western nations, are not free and independent. They are owned and controlled by largely conservative corporate cartels that adhere to the self-serving neoliberal ideology of international finance capital. The goal of these politico-economic elites is to transform the world into a global economy under the tutelage of the transnational corporations, backed by the unanswerable imperial might of the United States and its allies. A key component of that global strategy, of course, entails capitalist restoration within the former Communist countries. The corporate-owned media seldom stray too far from that dominant ideological paradigm, not only in the news that is reported but also in its editorials, commentaries, and opinion pieces. To the extent that journalists raise critical questions about policy, it is almost always at the operational level: "Are the bombings proving effective?" "Is the refugee problem under control?" Never do they question the underlying presumptions that brought about the bombings and created the refugees.

The publicly owned media, such as PBS and NPR in the United States or the BBC in Britain are not much better. They cannot be considered free and independent either. They function in an enduring political culture, subject to pressures from those who fund them (including, in the case of PBS and NPR, the federal government and large corporations). And they are no more immune to the hegemonic ideology than other mainstream institutions. Indeed, the public media have shown themselves to be eager cheerleaders for the official line on Yugoslavia.

So corporate-dominated media rather faithfully reflect the line put out by corporate-dominated political leaders, those decision makers who build their careers in service to the economic powers that be. In regard to Yugoslavia, the Western press dropped all pretense at critical independence and—with some notable exceptions—went into overdrive to demonize the

Serbs and create the sensationalist justification for NATO's destabilizing and violent interventions.

If Western sources are not reliable, can we rely on Yugoslav sources? While no doubt intent upon giving only their side of the story, Belgrade's official releases might contain useful and reliable information. Thus if Belgrade reported that the mass graves which supposedly littered Kosovo were nowhere to be found once the NATO forces occupied that province, or that Albanian separatists destroyed eighty Serbian Orthodox churches, monasteries, and other religious edifices in Kosovo since the NATO occupation, there is no reason to assume *ipso facto* that these stories are fabrications. In fact, both reports proved true, and were even given some passing attention in the Western press, though with a rather different spin. Furthermore, Belgrade's side of the story is one we never get in the West (where, supposedly, we get all sides of the story). For that reason alone, Belgrade sources might deserve some attention.

In any case, I want to point out that almost all the information used in this book emanates from well-established Western sources: the European Union, the European Commission (executive arm of the EU), the European Community's Committee on Women's Rights, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and its Kosovo Verification Mission, the UN War Crimes Commission and various other UN commissions and reports, the British Helsinki Human Rights Group, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), various State Department reports, the US Drug Enforcement Agency, and Western European drug enforcement units, the German Foreign Office and German Defense Ministry reports, the International Crisis Group, Amnesty International, and the International Red Cross.

In addition, I rely on members of the US Congress, including a former US Senate majority leader, along with a former US State Department official under the Bush administration, a former deputy commander of the US European command, and several UN and NATO generals and international negotiators. I also note the critical and neglected comments of Spanish air force pilots, forensic teams, and UN monitors.

For general information, I draw not only upon progressive sources like *CovertAction Quarterly* and the International Action Center, but also the *New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post,* Le Monde Diplomatique, London *Times, Toronto Star, Foreign Affairs, Christian Century, Economist, US News and World Report,* and various other US, British, Canadian, and French mainstream publications.

This raises another question: If we judge the mainstream press and Western official sources to be neither free nor independent and certainly not objective, why should we believe any of what they say? And what would be the criterion whereby we reject or select what is presented? The answer is the same as the one I gave in regard to Yugoslav sources. That a source is neither independent nor objective does not mean it cannot contain revealing information, often buried in relatively obscure places. Generally, mainstream information that goes against the mainstream's own dominant paradigm is likely to be reliable; it certainly cannot be dismissed as self-serving. Thus if the *New York Times* or the EU or the CIA or whatever publication, organization, or agency prints a particular item or account of events that contradicts what it usually maintains, then that would seem to be of special note: after all, they said it themselves. If the CIA were to admit, after years of denial, that it had a hand in the Central American drug trade, as some of its operatives have indeed testified under oath, then we can believe the CIA in that instance. If the Serbs were to admit that atrocities were committed by their paramilitaries, as indeed they have admitted, then the hostile reader could accept this as a reliable datum even though it came from Serbian sources—or especially since it came from Serbian sources.

Furthermore, there happens to be a public record that reveals a great deal of information normally ignored by Western propagandists. Thus, my argument against the hypocrisies of the Rambouillet agreement is not drawn from Belgrade sources but from my reading of the Rambouillet agreement itself. And my argument that Western leaders are intent upon foisting the inequities and hardships of the free-market upon Yugoslavia and other nations is supported by what Western leaders repeatedly and explicitly have said and done on behalf of free-market rollbacks in Yugoslavia and elsewhere. I do not have to go to Belgrade sources to support that point.

Finally, even when they are lying, the powers that be often reveal more than they intend. They sometimes can be hoisted on their own petards, given the disparities between their words and actions, given the contradictions and improbabilities of certain of their postures. There are some people who grow indignant at the suggestion that their political leaders lie to them, especially in regard to foreign policy. To suggest as much is to indulge in "conspiracy theories," they maintain. In fact, US presidents never lie so much as when they talk about US foreign policy. In the public stances he took in regard to Yugoslavia, Bill Clinton proved himself a professional liar. When dealing with what he and his associates have said, we can, without turning to alternative sources, point to the lack of evidence to support their claims, and to the contrary evidence suggested by their actions. And we can note their persistent manipulation of images and labels by which they have tried to short-circuit our critical thinking and make evidence itself irrelevant. As is frequently the case, liars can be the best witnesses against themselves.

So I invite the reader to consider an alternative approach, one that is in short supply in the Western corporate communication universe. I believe the public has not been told the whole story, the true story about the relentless attack on Yugoslavia. To arrive at a closer approximation of the truth is the first duty of a democratic citizenry. Only then can people exercise some control over their leaders rather than being led around by them. We owe this much to ourselves and to the people of the various nations still targeted by the Western militarists and free-marketeers.

Hypocritical Humanitarianism

From March 24 to June 10 1999, US military forces, in coordination with a number of other NATO powers, launched round-the-clock aerial attacks against Yugoslavia, dropping twenty thousand tons of bombs and killing upwards of three thousand women, children, and men. All this was done out of humanitarian concern for Albanians in Kosovo—or so we were asked to believe. In the span of a few months, President Clinton bombed four countries: Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq (repeatedly), and Yugoslavia (massively). At the same time, the US national security state was involved

in proxy wars in Angola, Mexico (Chiapas), Colombia, and East Timor, among other places. US forces were deployed across the globe at some three hundred major overseas bases—all in the name of peace, democracy, national security, and humanitarianism.

Some of us cannot help noticing that US leaders have been markedly selective in their supposedly humanitarian interventions. They made no moves against the Czech Republic for its mistreatment of the Roma (gypsies), or Britain for its longtime repression of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, or the Hutu for the mass murder of half a million Tutsi in Rwanda—or the French who were complicit in that massacre. Nor did US leaders consider launching "humanitarian bombings" against the Guatemalan people for the Guatemalan military's systematic slaughter of tens of thousands of Mayan villagers, or against the Indonesian people because their generals killed over two hundred thousand East Timorese and were engaged in such slaughter through the summer of 1999, not to mention the estimated half-million to one million Indonesians these same generals exterminated in 1965 and after.

Nor have humanitarian concerns caused US leaders and right-wing paramilitary forces to move against the scores of other countries around the world engaging in subversion, sabotage, terrorism, torture, drug trafficking, death squads, mass murder, and wars of attrition—actions that have been far worse than anything Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic has been charged with. In most cases, the US national security state has not only tolerated such atrocities but has been actively complicit with the perpetrators—who usually happened to be recipients of US aid and trade.[1]

Consider how the Kurds have been treated. At twenty-five million, the Kurds are the largest nationality group in the world without their own state. For thousands of years they have inhabited an area now part of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and the former Soviet Union. For decades US leaders and their faithful media mouthpieces ignored the suffering of the Kurdish people. During a brief period in 1990, while busily discrediting and attacking Iraq, US policy makers and media pundits made much of the fact that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was mistreating the Kurds under his rule. But not a critical word has been uttered against Turkey, that most faithful and repressive US

client state, with its long history of torturing and killing dissidents. In recent times Turkish leaders have razed or forcibly evacuated three thousand Kurdish villages; forty thousand Kurds have died in the process, with two million rendered homeless.[2] Here was an ethnic repression that dwarfed anything the Serbs were accused of perpetrating. Yet US leaders made no move to bomb Turkey. On the contrary, they have sold or given Ankara $15 billion worth of weapons since 1980. As a NATO member, Turkey was one of the countries that assisted in the bombing of Yugoslavia.

In 1995 the Clinton administration grudgingly acknowledged that Turkish leaders were committing serious abuses. But not to worry. Turkey's human rights record was reportedly "improving." In any case, as Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights John Shattuck pointed out, "I don't think the United States is responsible for Turkey's internal policies."[3] Why then does the United States presume to be so urgently responsible for Yugoslavia's internal policies, to the point of leveling death and destruction upon its people?

In 1993, Western leaders and liberal media commentators int he United States and Britain were calling for an interventionist campaign to rescue the Bosnian Muslims from the reputedly wicked Serbs. At that very time, more than a thousand people were dying every day in the CIA-sponsored war of attrition against Angola, far many times more than were perishing in Bosnia. The civil war in Liberia had displaced 85 per cent of the population. In Afghanistan, in Kabul alone, about a thousand people were killed in one week in May 1993. In July 1993, the Israelis launched a saturation shelling of southern Lebanon, turning some three hundred thousand Muslims into refugees, in what had every appearance of being a policy of depopulation or "ethnic cleansing."

Why were Western policy makers and media commentators so concerned about the Muslims of Bosnia but so unconcerned about the Muslims of Lebanon or Iraq? Why were they so stirred by the partition of Bosnia but not the partition of Lebanon? As the journalist and filmmaker Joan Phillips asks:

Why the Muslims of Bosnia, and never the Serbs of Bosnia? Why have liberals identified with the Muslim side in Bosnia so strongly that they have disqualified the Serbs from any sympathy? The Serbs have certainly got blood on their hands. But have all the atrocities in the dirty war in what was Yugoslavia been committed by one side? Why are eight hundred thousand Serbian refugees invisible to those liberal commentators searching for victims? Is it because the Serbs really are demons? Or is it because an increasingly conformist and uncritical media jumped on the anti-Serb bandwagon created by their governments at the start of the war in Yugoslavia, and never asked serious questions about what was going on?[4]

Bosnia must remain “multi-ethnic,” Western leaders argued, even as they tirelessly contrived to break up the large multi-ethnic federation of Yugoslavia, itself a nation of twenty-eight nationalities—and form fear-ridden mono-ethnic statelets. “All in all, there seems to be little consistency and even less principle involved in the liberal crusade for Bosnia. It makes you think that there might be a hidden agenda here somewhere,” Phillips concludes.[5]

So the question remains: is the US-NATO forceful intervention in Yugoslavia really motivated by a concern for the various non-Serbian ethnic groups? Is it to keep the peace and stop a genocide? For more than a decade, the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia have been presented as the culmination of historically rooted ethnic and religious enmities. The fact is, there was no civil war, no widespread killings, and no ethnic cleansing until the Western powers began to inject themselves into Yugoslavia's internal affairs, financing the secessionist organizations and creating the politico-economic crisis that ignited the political strife.

Are the Serbs really the new Nazis of Europe? For those who need to be reminded, the Nazis waged aggressive war on a dozen or more nations in Europe, systematically exterminating some nine million defenseless civilians, including six million Jews, and causing the deaths of millions of others during their invasions, including twenty-two million Soviet citizens.[6] The charges of mass atrocity and genocide leveled against Belgrade will be treated in the chapters ahead.

It is said that lies have wings while truth feebly slogs behind, destined never to catch up. This is often treated as being the inherent nature of communication. And it may sometimes be the case that truthful but mundane information cannot compete with the broad images repeatedly splashed across the media universe. But this is not sufficient explanation for the way issues are propagated in the global arena. Rather than ascribing reified, self-determining powers to concepts like truth and falsehood, we should note that the lies our leaders tell us succeed so well because they are given repeated and ubiquitous dissemination. The truth seldom catches up because those who rule nations and manage the mass communication universe have no interest in giving it equal currency.

If millions believe the lies again and again, it is because that is all they hear. After a while, it becomes the only thing they want to hear. Truly remarkable are the people throughout the world who remonstrate and demonstrate against these “humanitarian” interventions. The broad public in the United States and other Western countries remained notably lukewarm about the air campaign against Yugoslavia. The Clinton administration seemed acutely aware of this, as manifested by its unwillingness to commit ground troops out of fear that the US public would not tolerate the loss of American lives. A war for which citizens are not willing to make any sacrifices whatsoever is not a war for which the government can claim deep public support.[7]

Of course, Americans did not like what they heard about “genocide” and “ethnic cleansing,” but there were no signs of the jingoistic fervor that gripped many people during the Gulf War a decade earlier. If anything, there was a general feeling that they were not being told the whole story.[8] The obviously one-sided character of the air war, the fact that Yugoslavia had not invaded anyone, and the impact of the bombing upon a European civilian population contributed to a general sense of unease. Indeed, in the eleven weeks of NATO's “mission,” support dropped from over 65 per cent to barely 50 per cent and promised to continue downward.

WHEN TERRORISM IS NOT TERRORISM

State Department Counter-Terrorism Coordinator Michael Sheehan, speaking at a Briefing on the 1999 Annual "Patterns of Global Terrorism" Report, May 1 2000:

> SHEEHAN: Our definition of terrorism by the legislation is very explicit. But in general terms, in a war, if military forces are attacking each other, it's not terrorism. But if an armed terrorist organization attacks civilian targets, that's terrorism. So that's generally the breakdown. Or if you attack—it's also ... a terrorist attack if you attack military people in barracks, such as the Khobar bombings or the Marine barracks in 1982. Those are terrorist acts. Each case is taken on a case-by-case basis.
>
> REPORTER: So, for example, if the United States were to drop—what do you call them?—cruise missiles on people who were in barracks or in tents, as it may be, would that be terrorism? Could that be terrorism?
>
> SHEEHAN: No.
>
> [laughter]

The laughter was not included in the transcript of the briefing released by the state department, but could be heard when this segment was played on C-Span radio.

In response, the Clinton administration, with the active complicity of the media, took every opportunity to downplay the death and destruction caused by the bombings and every opportunity to hype images of satanic Serbian atrocities. Still, the wavering support for the onslaught must have played a part in the White House's decision to stop the bombing and settle for something less than the total occupation of Yugoslavia. This should remind us that the struggle against war and aggression begins at home. Thus it is imperative for us to make every effort to look critically at the prevailing orthodoxy, and devote ourselves to a different course.

Unlike most nations, Yugoslavia was built on an idea, Ramsey Clark once noted. With a federation of their own, it was hoped that the southern

Slavs would not remain weak and divided peoples, easy prey to imperial interests. The idea was that they would learn to live together, forming a substantial territory capable of economic development. Indeed, after World War II, socialist Yugoslavia became something of an economic success. Between 1960 and 1980 it had one of the most vigorous growth rates, along with free medical care and education, a guaranteed right to an income, one-month vacation with pay, a literacy rate of over 90 per cent, and a life expectancy of seventy-two years. Yugoslavia also offered its multi-ethnic citizenry affordable public transportation, housing, and utilities, in a mostly publicly owned, market-socialist economy. As late as 1990, better than 60 per cent of the total labor force was in the public sector, much of it self-managed.[1] Even Misha Glenny, who sees Stalinism lurking in every Communist system, was able to state: “Throughout forty years of Communist control in central and south-eastern Europe, Belgrade had always offered a ray of optimism. Together with its sister cities in the [Yugoslav] federation, Zagreb, Ljubljana and Sarajevo, it boasted a lively cultural life, [and] a relatively high standard of living....”[2]

This was not the kind of country that global capitalism would normally countenance. Still, the United States tolerated socialistic Yugoslavia's existence for forty-five years because it was seen as a wedge to divide the Warsaw Pact nations. The continued existence of Yugoslavia as a nonaligned socialist country also had the grudging support of the Soviet Union. Yugoslavia was a founding member of the United Nations and of the Nonaligned Nations Conference, and a regular participant in UN peacekeeping missions. But by 2000 it had been reduced to a pariah, the only country ever expelled from the United Nations. After the overthrow of Communism throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) remained the only nation in that region that would not voluntarily discard what remained of its socialism and install an unalloyed free-market system. It also proudly had no interest in joining NATO. The US goal has been to transform the FRY into a Third World region, a cluster of weak right-wing principalities with the following characteristics:

- Incapable of charting an independent course of self-development.

- Natural resources completely accessible to transnational corporate exploitation, including the enormous mineral wealth in Kosovo.
- An impoverished but literate and skilled population working at subsistence wages, a cheap labor pool that will help depress wages in Western Europe and elsewhere.
- Dismantled petroleum, engineering, mining, fertilizer, pharmaceutical, construction, automotive, and agricultural industries, so they no longer offer competition against Western producers.

US policy makers wanted to abolish Yugoslavia's public-sector services and social programs, using the same “shock therapy” imposed on the former Communist countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The ultimate goal has been the complete privatization and Third Worldization of Yugoslavia, Eastern Europe, and, for that matter, every other nation. It is to replace the social wage with a neoliberal global free market, a process that would deliver still greater wealth and power into the hands of those at the top.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, FRY leaders, not unlike Communist leaders in other Eastern European countries, committed a disastrous error. They decided to borrow heavily from the West in order to simultaneously expand the country's industrial base, its export production, and its output of domestic consumer goods. But when Western economies entered a recession and blocked Yugoslav exports, thereby diminishing its export earnings, this created a huge debt for Belgrade. And the massive debt began to develop its own interest-fed momentum. In short order, as in so many other debtor nations, the creditors, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), demanded a “restructuring.”[3] Restructuring consists of a draconian austerity program of neoliberal “reforms”: wage freezes, the abolition of state subsidized prices, increased unemployment, the elimination of most worker-managed enterprises, and massive cuts in social spending. The Yugoslavs were to consume less and produce more, so that a larger portion of the national wealth might be redirected toward meeting debt payments.

GETTING COZY WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

On NPR's *Talk of the Nation*, June 10 1999, Brian Atwood, an administrator in the US Agency for International Development (USAID), noted that the economies of the breakaway republics of Yugoslavia had to be transformed. "How do you privatize much of the society? . . . You have to use a lot of people on the ground, helping to provide the technical assistance so that societies can transform their [economic] systems." The other guest, Lodewijk Briet, a member of a European Commission delegation, agreed: "We need to work more closely with the private sector." He noted that US ambassador Richard Shifter, who was leading an effort in the state department in full coordination with USAID, "is . . . very much interested in getting the US private sector including, of course, the corporate sector, involved. And we are very much onboard in Europe as well."

Restructuring wreaked its neoliberal havoc. The World Bank drove hundreds of firms into bankruptcy, producing six hundred thousand layoffs in 1989-90, with additional hundreds of thousands working without pay for months at a time.[4] Tens of thousands of Yugoslavs were forced to find employment as guest workers in West Germany, Switzerland and elsewhere. Industrial production, which had averaged over 7 per cent annual growth during the late 1960s, plummeted to less than 3 per cent in the 1980s, and to minus 10 per cent by 1990. The IMF and World Bank "financial aid package" allowed for an influx of imports and unrestricted foreign capital, leading to a further slump in domestic production. Transfer payments from Belgrade to the republics were frozen, again undermining the federal fiscal structure.[5] The drastic economic depression induced by IMF restructuring in turn helped fuel the ensuing ethnic conflicts and secessionist movements.[6]

By 1991, the international creditors were in control of monetary policy. Yugoslavia's state-run banks were dismantled and the federal government no longer had access to its own Central Bank. Economist Michel

Chossudovsky points out that the country "was carved up under the close scrutiny of its external creditors, its foreign debt carefully divided and allocated to the republics, each of which was now committed to decades of debt payments."[7] With a few strokes, the international creditors helped dismember the FRY and put a fiscal headlock on the newly "independent" republics.

Through all this, the Serbian Republic was to prove especially troublesome. The government of Serbia rejected the austerity programs to which the federal government (then under a conservative president) agreed. Some 650,000 Serbian workers engaged in massive walkouts and protests, joined in many instances by workers of other ethnic backgrounds including Croats, Bosnian Muslims, Roma, and Slovenes.[8] In the 1990s, the rump Yugoslav federation (Serbia and Montenegro) continued to prove refractory. It refused to produce primarily for export and would not privatize completely. As late as 1999, more than three-quarters of its basic industry was still publicly owned.[9] As far as the Western free-marketeers were concerned, these enterprises had to be either privatized or demolished. A massive aerial destruction like the one delivered upon Iraq might be just the thing needed to put Belgrade more in step with the New World Order.

NOT CLEANSED ENOUGH

Belgrade reveals remnants of its Communist past in the many streets and buildings named for famous Communist leaders and partisan fighters. One major thoroughfare is "Boulevard of the Revolution;" others include "Lenin Boulevard" and "Brotherhood and Unity Highway." Surely, I thought to myself, as I read such street signs, US leaders will not leave this country alone until those names are changed to "IMF Avenue" and "Morgan Trust Way," or at least renamed after some orthodox saints or reactionary military heroes of yore.[10]

Divide and Conquer

Some people argue that nationalism, not class, has been the real motor force behind the Yugoslav conflict. This presumes that class and ethnicity are mutually exclusive. In fact, ethnic enmity can be enlisted to serve class interests, as the CIA tried to do with indigenous peoples in Indochina and Nicaragua—and more recently in Bosnia and Kosovo. One of the great deceptions of Western policy, remarks Joan Phillips, is that "those who are mainly responsible for the bloodshed in Yugoslavia—not the Serbs, Croats or Muslims, but the Western powers—are depicted as saviors."[1]

While pretending to work for harmony, US leaders have supported "self-determination" in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Vojvodina. "Self-determination" has meant the end of ethnic multiculturalism, the forced monopolization of territory by one or another national group, and the subverting of Yugoslav sovereignty. Legitimate measures of self-preservation taken by the FRY were now stigmatized as criminal actions. The Yugoslav army was no longer a legal instrument of national defense but an aggressor, a threat to the independence of "new nations"

When different national groups are living together with some measure of social and material security, they tend to get along. There is intermingling and even intermarriage. Misha Glenny, who ascribes the Yugoslav crisis almost entirely to ethnic enmities, nonetheless admits that before May 1991, Croats and Serbs lived together in relative contentment, experiencing everyday friendships throughout regions that were subsequently "so dreadfully ravaged." While aware that Yugoslavia was entering troubled seas, nobody in their wildest fantasies predicted that towns would be leveled, and Croats and Serbs killing each other. In Bosnia, too, there were "a large number of Muslims, particularly intellectuals in Sarajevo, who refused to give up the Yugoslav idea. They believed genuinely and reasonably that the chaotic mix of Slavs and non-Slavs on the territory of what was Yugoslavia forced everybody to live together."[2]

But as the economy gets caught in the ever-tightening downward debt spiral, with cutbacks and growing unemployment, it becomes easier to induce internecine conflicts, as the different nationalities begin to compete more furiously than ever for a share of the shrinking pie. And once the

bloodletting starts, the cycle of vengeance and retribution takes on a momentum of its own. In order to hasten the discombobulation of Yugoslavia, the Western powers provided the most retrograde, violent, separatist elements with every advantage in money, organization, propaganda, arms, hired thugs, and the full might of the US national security state at their backs. Once more the Balkans were to be balkanized.

Supposedly it was Serbian mass atrocities during 1991-95 that necessitated Western intervention. In fact the Western powers were deeply involved in inciting civil war and secession in the FRY *before* that time. One of the earliest and most active sponsor of secession was Germany, which first openly championed Yugoslavia's dismemberment in 1991, but was giving Slovenia and Croatia every encouragement long before then. Washington's declared policy was to support Yugoslav unity while imposing privatization, IMF shock therapy, and debt payment, in effect, supporting Yugoslavia with words while undermining it with deeds. Concern was expressed by the Bush administration that Bonn "was getting out ahead of the US" with its support of Croatian secession, but the United States did little to deter Germany's efforts.[3] And by January 1992, the United States had become an active player in the breakup of Yugoslavia.

That Washington consciously intended to undermine the socialist government of Yugoslavia one way or another is not a matter of speculation but of public record. As early as 1984, the Reagan administration issued US National Security Decision Directive 133: "United States Policy towards Yugoslavia," labeled "secret sensitive." A censored version of this document was released years later. It followed closely the objectives laid out in an earlier directive aimed at Eastern Europe, one that called for a "quiet revolution" to overthrow Communist governments while "reintegrating the countries of Eastern Europe into the orbit of the World [capitalist] market."[4] The economic "reforms" adopted in Yugoslavia under pressure from the IMF and other foreign creditors required that all socially owned firms and all worker-managed production units be transformed into private capitalist enterprises.

Washington threatened to cut off aid if Yugoslavia did not hold elections in 1990, further stipulating that these elections were to be conducted only

within the various republics and not at the federal level. US leaders—using the National Endowment for Democracy, various CIA fronts, and other agencies—funneled campaign money and advice to conservative separatist political groups, described in the US media as “pro-West” and the “democratic opposition.”[5] Greatly outspending their opponents, these parties gained an electoral edge in every republic save Serbia and Montenegro.

As economic conditions in the FRY went from bad to worse, the government of the Slovene Republic opted for “disassociation” and a looser confederation. In 1989, Slovenia closed its borders and prohibited demonstrations by any of its citizens who opposed the drift toward secession.[6]

Other US moves to fragment Yugoslavia came when the Bush administration pressured Congress into passing the 1991 Foreign Operations Appropriations Act. This law provided aid only to the separate republics, not to the Yugoslav government, further weakening federal ties. Arms shipments and military advisers poured into the secessionist republics of Slovenia and Croatia, particularly from Germany and Austria. German instructors even engaged in combat against the Yugoslav People's Army.[7]

FREE TEXAS! FREE CORSICA!

Visiting Belgrade after the bombings of 1999, I saw graffiti all over the city denouncing NATO, the United States, and Bill Clinton in the most bitter terms. “NATO” was repeatedly represented with the “N” in the form of a swastika. More than once I saw “Free Texas” sprayed across walls. As one citizen explained, Texas is heavily populated by Mexicans or persons of Mexican descent, many of whom suffer more serious cultural discrimination and economic adversity than did Kosovo Albanians. Should not Yugoslavia and other nations do whatever they can to make Texas into a separate polity for oppressed Mexicans? The same logic applied to the “Free Corsica” graffiti sprayed across the French

cultural center, gutted during the NATO bombings, along with the US and British cultural centers, by outraged Yugoslavs.[6]

Also in 1991, the European Community, with US involvement, organized a conference on Yugoslavia that called for “sovereign and independent republics.” In a final insult, Yugoslavia was banned from further meetings of the conference, and denied any say in its own fate, in what amounted to a repudiation of its sovereignty by the Western powers. So, for a number of years before hostilities broke out between various national groups in Yugoslavia, measures were being taken by the major powers and financial interests to undermine the Belgrade government and the national economy. An IMF-imposed austerity brought sharply declining living standards, which in turn corroded the rights and securities that people had come to rely upon. As the economy reeled from the neoliberal shock therapy, revenues to the central government declined, while tax burdens rose.

The more prosperous republics of Croatia and Slovenia increasingly resisted having to subsidize the poorer ones. As the federal government grew weaker, centrifugal forces grew bolder. That same year, in June, both Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence (Croatia one day ahead of Slovenia). The German government, along with the Vatican, hastened to recognize both of these breakaway republics as nation-states.

The self-declared Serbian Autonomous District of Krajina announced its intent to remain in the FRY. If Croatia was seceding from Yugoslavia, then Krajina would secede from Croatia.[8] (This suggests a parallel to the US Civil War. When Virginia seceded from the United States, the northwestern region of that state seceded from Virginia to form West Virginia, in a successful effort to remain a loyal part of the Union.) Serbs in Bosnia also voted overwhelmingly in a referendum of their own to remain part of the FRY—only to be ignored by the West. Clearly, the “right to self-determination” did not apply to the Serbs. The separatist movements in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia revived Serbian nationalists' dream of a nation-state, as promoted by those who believed that self-determination

belongs to ethnic nationalities not to republics or federations.[9] Many Serbs however continued to identify themselves as Yugoslavs.

In Slovenia, with its relatively homogeneous population and westerly location, secession brought only a brief armed conflict, the “ten-day war” between Slovene militia and the Yugoslav army. The quick independence won by Slovenia, however, was the opening wedge in the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, greatly encouraging nationalists in Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia to follow suit.

Secession for Croatia proved more difficult. Fighting between Croats and the large Serbian population that had lived in Croatia for centuries reached intensive levels and lasted several years. In early August 1995, Croatian forces launched the bloodiest offensive of the war, breaking the Serbian defenses in Krajina, killing thousands of Serb civilians, and sending 225,000 fleeing for their lives. This operation had the active participation of the Western powers. The previous month, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher gave a nod to Croatian military action against Serbs in Krajina and Bosnia. Two days later, US Ambassador to Croatia Peter Galbraith also approved the invasion plan. US-NATO planes destroyed Serbian radar and anti-aircraft defenses, and jammed Serbian military communications, leaving the skies open for the Western trained and funded Croatian air force to bomb Serbian defenses and strafe refugee columns. Trapped Serbian civilians, pouring into Bosnia, were massacred by Croatian and Muslim artillery.[10] According to the London Independent : “The rearming and training of Croatian forces in preparation for the present offensive are part of a classic CIA operation: probably the most ambitious operation of its kind since the end of the Vietnam war.”[11]

In 1992, Yugoslavia's southernmost republic, Macedonia, with a population of 1.5 million Slavs and a large Albanian minority, and with an economy relatively less developed than that of its sister republics and no army to speak of, declared its independence. Spurred by US support, its independence may be something less than complete, given the US troop occupation that Macedonia has had to accept.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, fighting erupted between Serbs, Muslims, and Croats, after the latter two groups voted to secede from Yugoslavia. No single nationality in Bosnia had a majority. The Muslims composed 41 per cent of the population, the Serbs 32 per cent, and the Croats 17 per cent. And there were some 326,000 Bosnian citizens, many of them offspring of mixed marriages, who continued to identify themselves only as Yugoslavs rather than as members of a distinct ethnic or religious cohort. It seemed that a majority of Bosnia's own population did not support a breakaway republic.[12]

Still the United States and Germany gave vital material aid to separatist forces in Croatia and Bosnia. An officer in the Yugoslav army is quoted as saying, “The Croat weaponry was invariably superior to ours. They had extraordinary German guns for their snipers which kept us almost permanently at bay.”[13] CIA personnel and retired US military officers, under contract to the Pentagon, trained and guided Muslim armed units. It is a matter of public record that the CIA fueled the Bosnian conflict. Consider these headlines: the Manchester Guardian, November 17 1994: “CIA Agents Training Bosnian Army”, the London Observer, November 20 1994: “America's Secret Bosnia Agenda”, the European, November 25 1994: “How The CIA Helps Bosnia Fight Back.” Several years later, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that “the CIA station in Bosnia is now reputed to be one of the largest in the region.”[14]

Charles Boyd, former deputy commander of the US European command, commented: “The popular image of this war [in Croatia] is one of unrelenting Serb expansion. Much of what the Croatians call 'the occupied territories' is land that has been held by Serbs for more than three centuries. The same is true of most Serb land in Bosnia—what the Western media frequently refer to as the 70 per cent of Bosnia seized by rebel Serbs. In short the Serbs were not trying to conquer new territory, but merely to hold onto what was already theirs.”[15] As a result of the war, Serbian land holdings in Bosnia were reduced from 65 to 43 per cent.[16] Boyd also faulted the US policy of covertly approving Muslim offensives that destroyed the very ceasefire Washington ostensibly supported. While US leaders claimed they wanted peace, Boyd concludes, they “encouraged a deepening of the war.”[17]

A ceasefire, the “Dayton accords,” was brokered by the Western powers in November 1995, with terms that insured Western suzerainty over a thoroughly partitioned Bosnia-Herzegovina. The larger portion became the Bosnian Federation (Muslim-Croat) and a smaller territory became Republika Srpska, into which Bosnian Serbs were corralled, those who had not fled to Serbia. All this time, US leaders acted as if any attempt by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to resist secession was a violation of national self-determination and international law.

Under the FRY constitution, the will of a republican majority could not override the equally valid will of a constituent nationality. In other words, the Croatian vote for independence could not negate the rights of the Krajina Serbs within Croatia. The latter had overwhelmingly rejected separatism in a referendum of their own. According to FRY constitutional principles, Croatian independence should have been conditional upon a successful resolution of Krajina's competing claim. The same rule applied to Bosnia. All this was completely ignored by Western leaders and their media acolytes, who assumed that while it was outrageous that Muslims and Croats should accept a minority position within Yugoslavia, it was perfectly all right for Serbs to accept a far less secure minority position within Croatia and Bosnia.

When the FRY sent aid to the embattled Bosnian Serbs, this was seen as a sign of aggrandizement on behalf of a “Greater Serbia.” But when Croatia sent its armed forces into Bosnia-Herzegovina “to carve out an ethnically pure Croatian territory known as 'Herceg-Bosna'” it was punished with nothing more than “half-hearted reprimands.”[18] The same double standard would later be applied respectively to Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo.

Were the secessions legal under international law, as the Western powers assumed? In fact, the recognition of Slovene, Croatian, and Bosnian independence by the Western powers “constituted an illegal intervention in Yugoslavia's internal affairs, to which Belgrade had every right to object,” argue Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson.[19] While championing the right of self-determination in the former Yugoslavia, the Western powers recognize no such right for populations within their own domains. Britain does not endorse the right of secession for Scotland, nor France for Corsica,

nor Spain for Catalonia or the Basque region. The United States does not acknowledge the right of any state or other constituent political unit or ethnic community within its boundaries to secede from the Union or, for that matter, to override the supremacy of federal power in any way. This was made perfectly clear in 1861-65, when the Southern Confederacy's secession was forcibly repressed in one of the bloodiest wars of the nineteenth century.

The US government does not recognize an innate right of secession for Puerto Rico, an “island commonwealth” unattached to continental USA, with a distinct ethnic population of its own that speaks Spanish rather than English. Puerto Rico is a colonial possession acquired by a war of aggression against Spain over a century ago. If Puerto Rico eventually attains independence, it will come as a concession conferred by Washington, not an inherent right exercised by the Puerto Ricans.

There is an argument made for secession as enunciated by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence: “a long train of abuses & usurpations” justify disassociation from an insufferable government. But as Tucker and Hendrickson point out, the Western interventionists have acknowledged the more or less equitable, peaceable, “almost idyllic” relations that obtained between Bosnian Serbs, Croats, and Muslims before hostilities. This undercuts the view that the Muslims had endured the kind of long-standing insufferable oppression that justifies recourse to revolution. While Western spokespersons maintained that Bosnian Muslims had every reason to fear living in a state (the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) dominated by Serbs, they repeatedly assumed that Serbs had no reason to fear living in a state (an independent Bosnia) dominated by Muslims and Croats. “That assumption is fundamentally implausible; it is, nevertheless, the unspoken assumption of the American government's position and of the dominant consensus in the United States regarding the origins of the [Bosnian] war.”[20]

At the time of the Bosnian breakaway, all that remained of Yugoslavia—Montenegro and Serbia—proclaimed a new Federal Republic. Even this severely truncated nation proved too much for Western leaders to tolerate. In 1992, at the urging of the United States and other major powers, the UN

Security Council imposed a universally binding blockade on all diplomatic, trade, scientific, cultural, and sports exchanges with Serbia and Montenegro, the most sweeping sanctions ever imposed by that body. The new FRY was suspended from membership in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), and was, in effect, ejected from the United Nations when not allowed to occupy the seat of the former Federal Republic.

The sanctions impacted disastrously upon Yugoslavia's already depressed economy, bringing hyperinflation, unemployment up to 70 per cent, malnourishment, and the virtual collapse of the health care system.[21] Raw materials required for the production of medicines were not getting into the country, nor were finished medical products. Medicine was no longer available in local currency. Patients were being asked to buy their own medications on the black market in exchange for hard currency, something most could not afford to do. People began dying from curable diseases.

As in Iraq, so in Yugoslavia, international sanctions inflicted severe suffering upon innocents. John and Karl Mueller wrote in Foreign Affairs that economic sanctions may now well be considered the leading weapon of mass destruction, having possibly “contributed to more deaths during the post-Cold War era than all the weapons of mass destruction throughout history.”[22] The civilian population does not suffer accidental or collateral damage from sanctions; it is the prime target.

To conclude: when their life chances become increasingly less promising, ordinary people jostle for survival, with many turning into ethnic militants —and some even into ethnic killers. Yet nationality differences do not of themselves inexorably lead to armed conflict. Many countries have histories of internal ethnic, religious, or cultural clashes that have not devolved into all-out war and secession. In the case of Yugoslavia, underlying conditions must be taken into account. What outside interests were exercising what power on behalf of whose agenda? “Tensions along ethnic, racial, or historical fault lines,” Susan Woodward concludes, “can lead to civil violence, but to explain the Yugoslav crisis as a result of ethnic hatred is to turn the story upside down and begin at its end.”[23]

Slovenia: Somewhat Out Of Step

The first breakaway republic of the former Yugoslavia was Slovenia. Often hailed as a success story, even an “economic miracle,” Slovenia escaped the hyperinflation that afflicted much of Yugoslavia. It also managed to redirect the bulk of its foreign trade to greener pastures. In 1991, on the eve of Slovenia's independence, nearly two-thirds of its commerce was with the other five Yugoslav republics. By the end of the decade almost 70 per cent was with the European Union. And its per capita income of $10,000 was close to that of Portugal and Greece. In 1998, it enjoyed a steady GDP growth of 4 per cent, while inflation remained in single digits. Slovenia's currency was stable, its budget balanced, and its public debt not a crushing one. Unemployment, almost unknown during the socialist era, was 7 per cent, still low compared to most Eastern European countries, including the rest of Yugoslavia.[1]

Before ascribing this economic performance to the wonders of the free-market, we should note that Slovenia resisted most of the drastic “reforms” avidly pushed by free-marketeers. Barely half of state-run enterprises have been privatized, and the new owners are mainly managers and workers, rather than large corporations. Foreign takeovers of industry and land, like those in Hungary and elsewhere, were prohibited—at least until 1999. In addition, pension and welfare programs remained reasonably good. Wages were higher than in most Eastern European countries. Because state welfare was generous and Slovenia had not subjected itself to the shock therapy of the free-market, the gap between the poor and the newly rich was markedly less drastic.

Given all this, one would think that Western leaders would hail Slovenia for having the good sense to develop a relatively successful mixed economy, and for not leaving itself open to the tender mercies of unbridled capitalist restoration. Here was a country taking a route somewhat different from the buccaneer profit-and-plunder road traveled by most other ex-Communist nations, and with good effect upon the living standard of its people. But it was this very thing that bothered the free-marketeers, whose concerns have little to do with the well-being of any particular population,

and whose focus is on investment opportunities, cheap-labor markets, readily accessible natural resources, and high rates of profit. It was Slovenia's very success, its unwillingness to go the harsh neoliberal route that incurred displeasure among big investors. If Slovenia wants to join the European Union, warned the Economist, it will have to drop “a lot of protectionist and nationalist rules of its own. ... [T]here is not enough shock in Slovenia's economic therapy.”[2]

Other things about Slovenia irritated the free-marketeers. Companies were too slow to revamp themselves. Pay was too high, driving out low-wage industries. It was difficult to fire workers. Pension and welfare budgets had to be “overhauled” (read: drastically cut)—even though Slovenia's budget deficit was relatively small compared to many other countries caught in the IMF debt trap. Banking, insurance, and utilities had to be privatized.[3]

In early 1999, under pressure from Western advisors, the Slovene government passed legislation allowing foreign ownership of land and freer movement of capital.[4] But Slovenia would have to make still more “painful decisions,” said the Western critics: fewer public protections, more unemployment to bring down income, lower wages for the many, and higher profits for the few; in other words, Third Worldization.

As of 2000, a coalition consisting of the centrist Liberal Democrats and the populist People's Party ruled Slovenia. The government was eager to join the EU and NATO. But the desire among the populace to join EU dropped from 80 to 60 per cent by 1999, as people began realizing the sacrifices they would have to make to “improve” economic performance—not for themselves but for Western investors.

ANOTHER POP VICTORY

One free-market "reform" developing in Slovenia was cultural imperialism, as might be expected. By 2000 the country was awash in US movies, music, and television shows—inundating whatever Slovene culture was trying to emerge. In keeping with its westernization, Slovenia also was experiencing a marked rise in youth crime. A Slovene woman, identified as a "social researcher" with a degree from the University of Colorado, said, "We want to develop Slovene citizens who would care for Slovene citizens and not just sell their souls to Beverly Hills."[5] She and her compatriots may never be given that choice.

As of mid 2000, the new republic's future did not look too bright. Once Slovenia's protectionist walls are completely battered down by the forces of free trade and globalization, it is only a matter of time before its land—which is not all that vast or that expensive—is bought up by a few giant cartels. This could mean the end of Slovenia's success in agricultural exports. Furthermore, once in the EU, the country will have less ability to protect itself from transnational corporate dumping. Slovenian markets will no longer belong to Slovenian producers, and underemployment will climb.[6]

As the economy recedes, many younger people at the height of their productive years are likely to migrate abroad to greener pastures, as has happened in other Third Worldized nations. This brain drain, in turn, will have a further depressive effect on domestic productivity, which only creates a still greater inducement for migration. In time, Slovenia may start losing production, markets, and population itself as is already happening in Croatia, Bosnia, Russia, and a half-dozen other countries. This Eastern European variation of Third Worldization seems to be what Slovenia's erstwhile allies in the West have in mind when they talk of a "more thorough reform program."

Croatia: New Republic, Old Reactionaries

After breaking away from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Croatia was ruled through most of the 1990s by the White House's man-of-the-hour, President Franjo Tudjman and his party, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ, “the party of all Croats in the world”). A close look at Tudjman is less than comforting. In a book he wrote in 1989, Wastelands of Historical Truth, he claimed that “the establishment of Hitler's new European order can be justified by the need to be rid of the Jews,” and that only nine hundred thousand Jews, not six million, were killed in the Holocaust. “Genocide is a natural phenomenon,” Tudjman wrote, “in harmony with the sociological and mythological divine nature. Genocide is not only permitted, it is recommended, even commanded by the word of the Almighty, whenever it is useful for the survival or the restoration of the kingdom of the chosen nation, or for the preservation and spreading of its one and only correct faith” (that being Roman Catholicism for Tudjman). Pope John Paul II, who never had a harsh word for right-wing autocrats, gave vigorous support to Croatia’s independence under HDZ leadership.

During World War II, the Croatian fascist organization, the Ustashe, actively collaborated with the Nazis, as did most of the pro-fascist Roman Catholic hierarchy in Croatia, under Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac, later promoted to cardinal by the Vatican. Stepinac was appointed by the Holy See to be chaplain of the Ustashe’s armed forces. In a toast to Adolf Hitler, he spoke warmly of blood, native soil, and love of one’s people, concluding, “Here it is easy to see God’s hand at work.”[1]

From 1941 to 1945, Croatia was a Nazi state, and a full-fledged Axis co-belligerent, officially at war with all the Allies. (It declared war against the United States on December 12, 1941.) Croatia had more men under arms proportionately than any other Axis state, with 160,000 regulars, 75,000 Ustashe militia, and 15,000 police auxiliaries. In addition to its own units, Croatia provided more volunteers for the German Army than any other nation in Nazi dominated Europe: five full-strength divisions, three

Wehrmacht and two Waffen SS, plus a “Croat Legion” of 7,000 volunteers on the Russian front, and an anti-aircraft unit of 500 men serving in Austria.

The Ustashe ran the notorious Jasenovac death camp, one of the largest in Europe, known as the Auschwitz of the Balkans. They slaughtered some 750,000 Serbs, 45,000 Jews, and at least 26.000 Roma, committing acts of mutilation and torture some of which purportedly were too much even for their German overlords.[2] With few exceptions, the Ustashe executioners, torturers, rapists, and murderers were never brought to justice. Immediately after World War 1, several thousand of them fled to Austria and Italy, followed by some five hundred Croatian Catholic clergy, including two bishops. “Trunks of gold and precious treasures were carried away in this gigantic exodus” reports one French Catholic author.[3] Millions of dollars in assets, plundered from those who perished in the death camps, were smuggled out of Croatia and sequestered by the Vatican, much of it subsequently distributed to other destinations, as former Ustashe might request. In 2000, legal actions were initiated by Serbs. Jews. Roma, and others against the Vatican in an attempt to recover stolen possessions.[4]

After the war. the most notorious of Ustashe leaders, Ante Pavelic and Andrija Artukovic, hid away in Austrian convents. Both were eventually apprehended by British occupation forces but, through mysterious interventions, were quickly released. Pavelic ended up in Argentina, and Artukovic in California where he lived and prospered for thirty-eight years until he was extradited in 1986: he died of natural causes in a Yugoslav prison in January 1998. Other Ustashe Nazis, assisted by Catholic clerical centers in Europe and the United States, were provided with false identity cards, and allowed to circulate freely across the Western world. Many remained active in various exile communities, publishing their unrelenting crypto-fascist anti-Semitic newspapers, tracts, and memoirs.[5] True to form, Tudjman openly hailed the Ustashe of World War II as patriotic independence fighters, and insisted that only thirty thousand people perished in the Jasenovac death camp.

Between 1991 and 1995, the army of the newly proclaimed Croatian republic conducted its own ethnic cleansing operations, replete with rapes, summary executions, and indiscriminate shelling, driving over half a

million Serbs from their ancestral homes in Croatia, including an estimated 225,000 Serbs from Krajina in August 1995 during what was called "Operation Storm."[6] The resistance of the Krajina Serbs was broken with assistance from NATO war planes and missiles. "We have resolved the Serbian question," crowed Tudjman in a speech to his generals in December 1998.[7]

The Croatian government, set up with the help of NATO's guns, named its new currency the *kuna*, after the currency that had been used by the Ustashe state. The Tudjman government also adopted the Ustashe red-and-white checkerboard insignia for its flag and army uniforms. HDZ supporters pointed out that the checkerboard emblem had been a Croatian symbol for centuries before the Ustashe used it. But to many Serbs, Jews, and others, it remained a symbol almost as detestable as the swastika, and its adoption by the new republic revealed a bruising insensitivity to Croatia's Nazi past.[8]

In addition, Croatia's school books were rewritten to downplay any critical anti-fascist perspective, and libraries were purged of volumes that the Croatian government deemed politically incorrect. Thousands of copies of the Yugoslav encyclopedia were burned. The Square of the Victims of Fascism in Zagreb was renamed. Numerous streets were renamed after fascist-friendly nationalist leaders of World War II, including Mile Budak, one of the founders of Croat fascism, who signed the regime's race laws against Serbs, Jews, and Roma. It was Budak who initiated the state's official policy on Serbs to expel one-third, convert one-third, and kill one-third. Over three thousand anti-fascist monuments were destroyed including the one at the Jasenovac extermination camp.[9]

Tudjman appointed former Nazi-collaborating Ustashe leaders to government posts. Vinko Nikolic was given a seat in parliament upon his return to Croatia. Mate Sarlija was made a general in the Croatian army. And former Ustashe commander in Dubrovnik Ivo Rojnica just missed becoming ambassador to Argentina when Tudjman withdrew his appointment because of negative international reaction.[10]

Serb-hating was abundantly evident during Tudjman's reign, while anti-Semitism was only thinly disguised. Dunja Sprac, a Croatian Jew who

worked with refugees, noted that the Croatian ruling class liked to pretend "they love Jews and want to help us. But it is so transparent. ... I see all these awful disgusting symbols, the false newspaper articles and the streets and squares being renamed. This country is in great poverty, not just economically but ethically. It terrifies me."[11] Sometimes the Jew-baiting was quite blatant, as when the pro-government newspaper *Vecemji List* published comments like: "The Jew Soros is using the Jew Puhovski to intervene in Croatia."[12] So too the racism, as when in April 1994, the government demanded that all "nonwhite" UN troops be removed from Croatia, claiming that only "first-world troops" were sufficiently sensitized to Croatia's problems.[13]

AN USTASHE KIND OF JUSTICE

One of the former commanders of the Jasenovac death camp, Dinko Sakic, who lived openly under his own name in Argentina for half a century, was paid a friendly visit by Tudjman in 1995. Sakic told a Croatian journalist that he was proud of his wartime record and regretted that more Serbs had not perished at Jasenovac. He was subsequently deported to Croatia where he was indicted in early 1999. As President Tudjman freely admitted, the indictment came only because of pressure from abroad. When Sakic's trial began, many of the witnesses, who originally told of seeing him supervise torture sessions and executions at Jasenovac, suddenly could not recall anything damaging. Questioned later, some of them admitted to changing their testimony after receiving anonymous death threats.[14]

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which includes the United States along with some fifty other nations, has the self-appointed task of overseeing the development of democracy in former Communist nations. In March 1999, it reported: "There has been no progress in improving respect for human rights, the rights of minorities and the rule of law" in Croatia. According to Raymond Bonner, writing in the *New York Times*, the OSCE report was "astonishing for its lack of

diplomatic circumlocution [and] damning details about repression of the media by the Croatian government, about its lack of cooperation with the [International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY)], situated in The Hague and, above all, about the government's harsh treatment of ethnic Serbs."[15]

Tudjman and his HDZ cohorts imposed tight restrictions on the media, far tighter than anything Milosevic was applying in what remained of Yugoslavia. Anyone who openly criticized the Croatian government risked some kind of retribution. Croatian television, which served as the prime news source, "remained subject to political control by the ruling party," according to the OSCE report, which also noted that TV programs were marked by "hate speech." Tudjman's office promulgated a series of state edicts forbidding the media from using certain political terms, and requiring them to refer to Serbs exclusively as "Serb terrorists" and the Yugoslav People's Army as the "Serbo-Communist occupation army," according to Susan Woodward. Urban intellectuals whose political self-identities were not ethnic but ideological (such as liberal or social democratic) were publicly instructed to identify themselves as either Croat or Serb.[16]

Under HDZ rule, citizens who were not ethnic Croatian were denied employment and faced confiscatory property taxes. Eastern Orthodox clergy were threatened and their churches vandalized. Serbian residents who still lived in Croatia were threatened, attacked, and denied any effective police protection. Their leaders were detained without cause. And there continued a movement to "purify" the Serbo-Croatian language by purging Serbian words and banning the use of Cyrillic characters.[17]

While quick to perceive injustices perpetrated by Serbs, US leaders never looked too unkindly on the human rights abuses committed by the HDZ regime in Croatia. In February 1999, the US State Department belatedly made public a report describing Croatia as "nominally democratic" but "in reality authoritarian." The behavior here is emblematic of the hypocrisy of US policy in the Balkans (and elsewhere). Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Zagreb and delivered a reportedly "tough message" to Tudjman about the need to become more democratic in his dealings with the public and more receptive to displaced Croatian Serb refugees.

However, upon returning to Washington, she privately sent Tudjman a friendly letter which so pleased him that he promptly leaked it to the press. One Croatian newspaper described the missive as having the “taste of apology.”[18]

Tudjman died in office in December 1999, during his second term as president. He left a legacy of unjust authoritarian rule, at least 20 per cent unemployment, and economic conditions that even the *New York Times* described as “miserable.” “While a few at the top, the political allies of Mr. Tudjman and the ruling party, have acquired fabulous wealth, which they flaunt with flashy cars and expensive clothes,” there is widespread poverty below, with the middle class being reduced to an increasingly penurious condition.[19] One Croat opposition leader criticized Tudjman for having done “more damage to Croatia than good,” producing “widespread corruption [and] nonfunctioning state institutions.”[20]

Things were even worse for the thousands of Serbs who remained in Croatia, especially the elderly. Many were living under shocking conditions, according to Alice Mahon, a visiting British member of parliament. Serbs encountered discrimination in health care, education, and employment, she found. While homes occupied by Croats benefited from full reconstruction finance, Serbs were unable to get assistance to rebuild their destroyed domiciles.[21]

When it came to producing an inequitable and dysfunctional state, Tudjman had plenty of help from international financial interests. Under a 1993 agreement with the IMF, the Croatian government was not permitted to use fiscal or monetary policy to mobilize its own productive resources. The deep budget cuts mandated by IMF restructuring forestalled the possibility of Croatian-directed investment and production. Government development programs could be conducted only through fresh foreign loans, which would fuel Croatia's already sizable debt for generations to come.[22]

In early January 2000 the HDZ suffered a dramatic drop in support and was voted out of office in favor of a centrist coalition that, while promising to clean up the worst of the HDZ's corruption and abuses,[23] was not likely

to do much to free Croatia from the financial grip of its Western "liberators."

Bosnia: New Colonies

Bosnia-Herzegovina represents another unhappy episode in the Western campaign to dismember Yugoslavia. After a protracted armed struggle between Croats, Muslims, and Serbs—aided and abetted by NATO bombings that helped break the Serbian defenses in 1995—Bosnia-Herzegovina was partitioned into two new "republics": the Muslim-Croat Federation of Bosnia and Republika Srpska (Serb Republic) composed of Bosnian Serbs.

Officially, the Dayton Accords of November 1995 were supposed to restore autonomous rule in Bosnia, based on national reconciliation. In reality, Dayton wrote into the constitutions of the new Bosnian "republics" what amounted to a colonial administration. A "High Representative," a non-Bosnian citizen, was appointed by the United States and the European Union and accorded full executive authority over both the Muslim-Croat Federation and Republika Srpska. Acting as a colonial dictator, he could overrule the laws passed by either government. He could even remove officeholders should they incur his displeasure. Bosnia, in effect, was stripped of economic and political sovereignty, and put under IMF and NATO regency. With international "supervision" of this sort, elections became little more than elaborately contrived opinion polls.[1]

In both Croatia and Bosnia, the Western interventionists lent their support to individuals with seriously tainted credentials, but credentials that guaranteed right-wing rule. In Bosnia, their choice was Alija Izetbegovic, who during World War II had been a member of the Young Muslims, a fundamentalist organization that advocated an Islamic Bosnia. Expecting that an Axis victory would advance their cause, the Young Muslims actively recruited Muslim units for the SS. Trained, equipped, and directed by the Nazis, the Muslim SS perpetrated atrocities against the resistance movement and the Jewish population in Yugoslavia, and helped guard the railway link between Auschwitz and the Balkans.[2]

In 1990 Izetbegovic ran for president of Bosnia-Herzegovina and placed second. Through backroom maneuvering he managed to wrest the presidential post away from the winner, Fikret Abdic, a member of his own party. Since the constitution stipulated an annually rotating presidency, Abdic did not protest too strenuously, expecting to take office the following year. However, Izetbegovic refused to step down, and instead began preparing for secession and war. Meanwhile, Abdic negotiated hard for a peace settlement. Izetbegovic responded by ousting him from the government. Returning to the Bihac region where he was wildly popular, Abdic declared the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia.

Abdic's Muslim troops fought Izetbegovic's Muslim troops for the remainder of the Bosnian war. Abdic signed peace and cooperation agreements with Bosnian Croatians and Bosnian Serbs. At one point, Izetbegovic's army drove Abdic's forces from the Bihac region, massacring and arresting hundreds, causing a mass exodus of sixty thousand. Later on, Abdic's forces, aided by the Bosnian Serbs, fought their way back, remaining in control until the war's final days, when NATO's aerial attacks allowed Izetbegovic's troops to take huge chunks of territory from both the Bosnian Serbs and Abdic, once again causing an exodus from Bihac. Izetbegovic got the International Criminal Tribunal to charge Abdic as a "war criminal," thereby banning him from participating in elections. Having survived several assassination attempts and fearing for his life, Abdic moved to Croatia, where he lived under a kind of house arrest. He remains one figure who behaved honorably throughout the war and was sincerely interested in peaceful relations between the various nationalities. For this he received no help and much hindrance from Western interventionists.[3]

The Serbs issued warnings that Izetbegovic intended to turn Bosnia into an Islamic state, a charge that was dismissed as sheer fabrication by US leaders and pundits. Thus *New York Times* reporter Roger Cohen, a tireless champion of the US interventionist policy against Yugoslavia, chose to see Izetbegovic's calls for Islamic control of government as merely "an attempt to reconcile the precepts of the Koran with the organization of a modern state."[4] In fact, Izetbegovic was unambiguous about his intentions, writing that "Islamic society without an Islamic government is incomplete and impotent," and "history does not know of a single truly Islamic movement

which was not simultaneously a political movement."[5] He also called for strict religious command over the press, warning that the media should not "fall into the hands of perverted and degenerate people" and the mosque and TV transmitter should not "aim contradictory messages at the people."[6] Even Richard Holbrooke, one of the White House's hand-picked purveyors of US interventionism, remarked that Izetbegovic rejected "any form of compromise, even minor gestures of reconciliation" at Dayton. "Although he paid lip service to the principles of a multi-ethnic state, he was not the democrat that some supporters in the West saw."[7]

With his usual level of accuracy, Roger Cohen reassured his *New York Times* readers that Izetbegovic had no army and no plans for war. In reality, as early as May 1991, ten months before the independence declaration that ignited the Bosnian conflict, Izetbegovic's party had organized its own armed forces, and was soon engaged, along with Tudjman's Croatian army, in conquering large portions of Bosnia that had been inhabited for generations almost exclusively by Serbs. As Holbrooke admitted, these actions in western Bosnia generated "at least one hundred thousand Serb refugees."[8]

WHO WANTED PEACE IN BOSNIA?

When the irritable Bosnian Muslims finally came to Dayton, they constantly obstructed the negotiations and each other. After a fortnight in Dayton, [Richard] Holbrooke reported to Undersecretary of State Warren Christopher that the most disturbing problem he faced was the "immense difficulty of engaging the Bosnian government in a serious negotiation". . . . [T]he dour Izetbegovic never showed any interest whatsoever in making peace.

As the Dayton talks were at the eleventh hour, Holbrooke was deeply concerned "that even if Milosevic makes more concessions, the Bosnians [Muslims] will simply raise the ante." Western officials were wondering: Does Izetbegovic even want a deal? . . . Clearly Dayton would never have produced any agreement at all without the unflagging help of the one participant who really seemed anxious for peace: Slobodan Milosevic. . . . Dayton is a chronicle of concessions made by Milosovic . . . [who had] only one ambition: to end his country's isolation.[9]

Under the Dayton agreement, the newly constituted Muslim-Croat Federation was not permitted to develop its own internal resources, nor allowed to self-finance through an independent monetary system. The constitution stipulated that the IMF would appoint the first governor of the Central Bank of Bosnia-Herzegovina, who "shall not be a citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina or a neighboring State." The Central Bank could not pursue an independent policy, and for the first six years could "not extend credit by creating money." International loans were not allowed to finance economic development but were used to fund the military deployment of Western troops in Bosnia as well as repay debts to international creditors.

In Bosnia, the Western powers moved toward their central objective: privatization and Third Worldization. The Bosnian Federation's state-owned assets, including energy, water, telecommunications, media and transportation, were sold off to private firms at garage-sale prices.[10]

Essential health services fell into a state of neglect, and the economy as a whole remained in a sorry condition.[11] In December 1996 a “peace implementation conference” held in London by the Western powers committed the Bosnian leaders “to reconstruct the shattered economy along free-market economy lines, including significant privatization and close cooperation with the World Bank.” Western officials in Bosnia set up a commission of their own to manage the privatization process and review each decision.[12]

By November 1998 US overseers were pushing hard for privatization, threatening to discontinue millions of dollars in aid to the Muslim-Croat Federation because the time was long overdue for it to make a full and rapid transition “to a sustainable market economy,” as one US spokesperson put it. “We are prepared to cut off projects, programs, anything to get their attention. ... [There must be] much more progress on privatization” and foreign investment.[13]

Widespread corruption did not help Bosnia’s economic prospects. A fact-finding team dispatched by US Congressman Benjamin Gilman, chair of the House International Relations Committee, discovered that large portions of the $5.1 billion in international assistance funneled to Bosnia were unaccounted for. In just one of the country’s ten cantons, hundreds of millions of dollars provided to the Muslim-Croat Federation had been stolen. Gilman called on the White House to create a “financial SWAT team” to pursue the inquiry in Bosnia.[14]

Years after the war, violence continued to be a feature of Bosnian society. Many Muslim communities were plagued by gangs that waged “a campaign of black marketeering, robbery, rape and killing.”[15] People blamed Izetbegovic for doing little to put a stop to the gang violence. As in Russia and other former Communist lands, widespread criminal activity functioned as an instrument of social control. Populations that are cowed and demoralized by crime are less apt to organize against the new investment class. Civic structures that are underfunded, ill-equipped, and divested of significant democratic power are more likely to fall prey to gangster rule, and less likely to challenge the privatization and plunder of public resources.

For all intents and purposes, Bosnia-Herzegovina became a Western colonial protectorate. Western officials imposed most of the fiscal and monetary policies. Western intelligence agents operated at will throughout the society. The media and the schools were cleansed of any dissident viewpoints. If any groups were to organize and agitate for an end to debt payments, or a return to socialism, or complete independence from Western occupation, SFOR, the NATO-led stabilization forces in Bosnia, was ready to deal with them.

What exists in Europe and much of the world today, as one commentator in *Le Monde Diplomatique* suggests, is "a hierarchical grouping of states" in which:

> countries find greater or lesser favor depending on how they align themselves with Western economic and security interests. Rebel states, like Milosevic's Yugoslavia, will be left out of this new deal. The pact is basically designed to introduce market mechanisms wherever possible, and it is a fair bet that many of the Balkan states are going to find this kind of reconstruction just as painful as the war.[16]

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Western powers put aside the indirect forms of neo-imperialism and opted for direct colonialism. This is no more clearly evident than in Republika Srpska, that portion of Bosnia-Herzegovina consigned to Bosnian Serbs.

Republika Srpska (RS), or Serb Republic, is the smaller portion of Bosnia-Herzegovina left to the Bosnian Serbs after it was partitioned. Gregory Elich provides an excellent and well-documented account of the Western colonialist rule imposed on Republika Srpska. What follows is drawn almost entirely from his writing.[1]

The first RS president, Radovan Karadzic, incurred the ire of the West when he proposed that Serb majority areas of Bosnia be allowed to remain within Yugoslavia rather than being forced to secede against their will. In addition, although Karadzic was not a Communist, he appointed many Communist and leftist officers because they were his most capable military men, and they shared his anti-separatist goal. Western threats and diplomatic pressure forced him from office, allowing vice-president Biljana Plavsic, a right-wing monarchist, to take over the presidency. In violation of

its own professed commitment to free speech and democracy, NATO ordered Republika Srpska to remove all posters of Karadzic (now branded a war criminal), and to avoid ever referring to him in speeches, or on television or radio. Although sent down the Orwellian memory hole, Karadzic was still at large and being hunted by Western intelligence agents as of 2000.

President Plavsic worked closely with Western authorities, purging the RS army of over one hundred officers suspected of leftist leanings. “Leftist” officers were ones who were sympathetic to collectivist social programs and unfriendly toward capitalist restoration and the free-market agenda. When these officers resisted their removal, special police units moved against them. The progressive Radio Krajina, a station run by the army, was shut down. RS military leaders charged that the Interior Ministry carried out these measures “on orders from foreign mentors.”[2]

With NATO troops backing her, Plavsic then began a purge of the civilian government, pushing the surprise nomination of Milorad Dodik as premier, a highly unusual choice since Dodik’s party held but two seats in the People’s Assembly. Yet Carlos Westendorp, NATO’s “High Representative” in Bosnia, immediately hailed the appointment. Westendorp had authority to remove uncooperative elected officials and impose Western-approved solutions. In a menacing show of support for Dodik, NATO troops were deployed around the Interior Ministry.

Several months earlier, the Bosnian Serb press had charged that Dodik was “under direct control of the US intelligence service, the CIA” and some deputies in the RS Assembly alleged that “he had already traveled abroad several times for consultations and direct instructions.” The lavish praise Western leaders heaped on the heretofore obscure Dodik lent support to the accusation.[3]

In violation of the constitution, Plavsic dissolved the People's Assembly in 1997. Instead of condemning this abrogation of democratic rule, Western officials supported the move. When the RS Constitutional Court found her action to be unconstitutional, its ruling was simply ignored. In the words of US State Department spokesman James Rubin, “Challenges to [Plavsic's]

actions are not legally valid" and Serbs who fail to comply with Western demands are "stupid." Reports in the Yugoslav press talked of multi-million-dollar payments from covert US sources to a Swiss bank account in Plavsic's name. Many of the individuals Plavsic appointed to her staff came from abroad and were of monarchist persuasion.[4]

In August 1997, NATO troops began seizing police stations in Republika Srpska, ejecting police officers and hiring new ones who were trained by Western police instructors. As UN police spokesperson Liam McDowall explained: "We basically let them know what is expected of a normal police force; not a socialist police force. ..."[5] At about that time, NATO troops began to take over radio and television stations throughout Republika Srpska, handing the transmitters over to Plavsic. When large crowds angrily protested, they were greeted with NATO armed vehicles, tear gas, and warning shots. NATO Secretary General Javier Solana announced that NATO "will not hesitate to take the necessary measures, including the use of force, against media networks or programs" critical of Western intervention.[6]

By the autumn of 1997, NATO "peacekeepers" had completed their takeover of police stations and had forcibly shut down the last dissident radio station. The *New York Times* took elaborate pains to explain why silencing this one remaining Serb station was necessary for advancing democratic pluralism. The Times used the terms "hardline" or "hardliner" eleven times to describe Bosnian Serb leaders who failed to see the shutdown as "a step toward bringing about responsible news coverage in Bosnia."[8] Throughout the Western intervention, those who agreed with the free-market agenda were deemed "pro-West" and "democratic" in their perspective. Those who disagreed were by definition "undemocratic hardliners."

IMPERIAL DOUBLE STANDARDS

Americans assume that the "democratic principles" we live by in the United States (such as the First Amendment) should apply everywhere in the world under all circumstances. Yet even in the

> United States there are places journalists are not allowed to go and things they are not allowed to print, usually in the interest of "national security." And our government is more than willing to bomb TV transmitters [killing sixteen Yugoslavs, mostly journalists] and censor our enemy's media, justifying it by characterizing Serb media as propaganda and tools of war (as if the US media weren't) ... American journalists still seem to expect to be protected by the US Constitution while in another country, and [they expect] that country [to] be more forthcoming with military information than even our own country's leaders are. It's the height of imperialist vainglory.[7]

In April 1998, Western officials organized a tribunal to censor and govern media in Bosnia-Herzegovina. "The tribunal not only arrogated to itself the power to shut down radio, television and newspapers that voice criticism of NATO's occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also the authority to write laws regulating broadcasting," notes Elich. Under the guise of "democratic reform," foreign powers were dictating what the media could or could not say in their own nation. In 1999, this censorship tribunal ordered Television Kanal S to "immediately cease broadcasting." Kanal S did not carry Western news programs, and it committed a "serious violation" by broadcasting a message from Sarajevo University students inviting participation in a peaceful protest against NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia. Such flickers of dissent were deemed intolerable by the champions of Western democracy.

The occupying powers also exercised a heavy hand over the electoral process, striking political candidates from election lists on the flimsiest excuses. The OSCE election commission eliminated three candidates of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) because posters of the former RS president Karadzic had been displayed. The SDS was not permitted to replace these candidates. The next year, nine candidates of the Serbian Radical Party were stricken from the lists because a TV station in neighboring Yugoslavia broadcast an interview with the party's presidential candidate, Nikola Poplasen. Apparently, television programs from a "foreign source"

(Yugoslavia) represented a contaminating outside influence but not NATO troops and OSCE committees dictating who could and could not run as candidates, and what could be broadcast about the election by whom.

In September 1998, despite all the censorship and repression, citizens of Republika Srpska rejected NATO's well-financed candidate, the incumbent Plavsic, and elected Poplasen as president. "Whatever else one can say for them," writes Diana Johnstone, "the September 1998 elections showed that neither television nor money from the 'international community' determined the way Bosnian Serbs vote."[9] Infuriated by the election outcome, the Western colonialists immediately began to pressure Poplasen to break off relations with Yugoslavia, and appoint their pet Milorad Dodik as prime minister. When he refused, the legally elected Poplasen was forcibly deposed from office by Westendorp. Belgrade condemned the moves as a drastic abuse of the Dayton Accords.[10] Elich remarked that this "coup d'etat by decree" left no pretense of democracy. Western diktat was deemed democratic simply by virtue of being Western."[11]

Under the guise of hunting down war criminals, NATO continued to commit war crimes of its own, including kidnapping and assassination. In January 1996 two Bosnian Serb generals, Djordje Djukic and Aleksa Krsmanovic were asked to meet with Western civilian and NATO officials. Instead a trap was set, and both men were seized and imprisoned by Bosnian Muslim soldiers. Two weeks later, the two were transferred to The Hague where they underwent protracted interrogations and were pressured to accuse other Bosnian Serb leaders of war crimes, in exchange for lighter treatment for themselves. When both refused, punishment was not long in coming. Djukic was charged with such heinous deeds as having been "assistant commander for logistics," and "proposing appointments of personnel," and "issuing orders relating to the supply of materiel for units of the Bosnian Serb Army." Nothing even as flimsy as that could be cooked up against Krsmanovic, who was held without charges for several more weeks of interrogation and then released. Though suffering from an advanced case of pancreatic cancer, Djukic was incarcerated for almost three months. In late April he was returned to his family; he died a few weeks later.[12]

On July 10 1997, a joint US-British operation swooped down on two other Bosnian Serbs without a public indictment against either. After gaining entrance to the Prijedor Medical Center, four NATO operatives arrested the popular hospital director, Milan Kovacevic. The arrest provoked an angry demonstration by the hospital's medical staff and several hundred citizens. During the Bosnian war, Kovacevic had been a member of the local governing committee. NATO accused him of having ordered the ethnic cleansing of Muslims from Prijedor, when in fact, such actions were not done in an organized fashion but by Serbian gangs and paramilitaries. About a year after he was arrested, his doctor visited him in jail and recommended treatment for his serious heart ailment. Instead, after the doctor departed, Kovacevic was left unattended in his cell, in acute pain, crying out for help when a blood vessel burst in his chest. The guards ignored both him and the other prisoners who started shouting for someone to assist him. Kovacevic died that night.

Former security chief Simo Drljaca was equally unfortunate. As he returned from fishing, dressed in a bathing suit, to have breakfast with family and friends, NATO troops burst on the scene and began firing. A witness recounts: “Music was playing. I was sitting. Then suddenly I heard screams. ... Soldiers were armed ... and they fired at [Simo]. Then I saw Simo lying down on the sand near a beach. He was lying on his side and shaking. Then a soldier came close to him and fired another bullet at him and finished him off.”

Another NATO assassination took place on January 10 1999, targeting a car occupied by Dragan Gagovic and five children from his karate class. Gagovic had been the local police chief in Foca during the war, and had been charged with knowing of abusive conditions in prisons. Why NATO waited almost seven years to go after him is not clear. One of the children, Sonja Bjelovic, described the ambush: “We heard shots. Our coach [Dragan] said, 'Down, you can be hit.’ He tried to protect us. ... However, the car was hit, tires went flat and it overturned. I saw our coach covered with blood.” Dragan was shot dead by the defenders of democratic procedures.[13]

The two halves of Republika Srpska were held together by a narrow three-mile-wide strip in which lies Brcko, a city of ninety thousand. On the day that Poplasen was removed as president, Robert Owen, Western arbiter for Brcko, put the city under joint control of the Muslim-Croat Federation and Republika Srpska. Under this new ukase, Bosnian Serb forces could no longer move from one half of the RS to the other without NATO permission; the area was in effect split into two parts. Without control of Brcko, the western part of Republika Srpska, where two-thirds of Bosnia's Serbs live, was now pinned between the Muslim-Croat Federation and Croatia itself, disconnected from the eastern part, which runs alongside Serbia proper.[14] To back Owen's decision, NATO troops bolstered their presence in Brcko.[15] It was made known, Elich reports, that the Muslim-Croat Federation, which had been richly equipped with some of the latest Western weaponry, would receive the green light from NATO to invade Republika Srpska were it “ever to display too much independence and recalcitrance in response to NATO demands.”

One such demand was that Republika Srpska take the proper steps toward privatization. The process initiated by the RS government, allocating some 47 per cent of companies' shares to seven government-managed funds, was judged unacceptable by the Western free-marketeers. Documents from the US embassy in Sarajevo noted: “In the RS, the privatization framework is being overhauled and will create more opportunities for involvement of potential foreign investors.” The World Bank and USAID helped develop laws similar to those in the Muslim-Croat Federation, aiming “to promote foreign direct investment” and “favorable tax conditions” with “no restrictions on foreign investment” (except armaments and media, which presumably Western authorities preferred to control directly). “Expropriation or nationalization actions against foreign investments” were expressly disallowed.[16]

For all intents and purposes, Republika Srpska became a NATO colony. Its citizens were free to pursue only those policies pleasing to their imperialist overlords, free to listen only to media programs and elect only candidates approved by NATO. By definition, the free-market reforms and NATO domination were equated with democracy. And by definition, any

resistance to such rule, even by duly elected RS representatives, was deemed hard-line, anti-reformist, and anti-democratic.

The Other Atrocities

To win support for a costly, illegal, and often bloody intervention in Yugoslavia, Western leaders had to portray themselves as engaged in a selfless humanitarian crusade against the worst of all evils—as they have done so many times in the past. To accomplish this, they filled the air with charges about brutally depraved Serbian aggressors who perpetrated genocidal atrocities against innocent Croats, Muslims, and ethnic Albanians.

Atrocities such as murder and rape are committed in almost every war (which is not to consider them lightly). Indeed, murder and rape occur with appalling frequency in many peacetime communities, and political leaders who wish to fight such crimes could start by directing their energies closer to home. What should be remembered is that the Serbs were never accused of having committed murder and rape as such, but of (a) perpetrating mass murder and mass rape on a "genocidal" scale, and (b) doing such as part of an officially sanctioned systematic policy.

What evidence we have suggests that serious atrocities indeed were committed by all sides in the Croatian and Bosnian conflicts. But the extent and scope of such crimes is open to question, as is the reportage that cast almost all the blame upon the Serbs while whitewashing the brutalities committed by military and paramilitary units of Croatians and Muslims. Regarding war crimes, British writer Joan Phillips was one of the few to question the media's selective perceptions:

> People on all sides have lost everything; their families, homes, land, possessions, health and dignity. So why do we hear little or nothing about the suffering endured by the Serbs? ... Western journalists go to Bosnia to get a story. But they have just one story in mind. ... [T]he Serbs are the bad guys and the Muslims are the victims. Their governments have all declared the Serbs to be the guilty party in Yugoslavia, and journalists, almost without exception, have swallowed this story without question. That's why they see only what they want to see—Serbian atrocities everywhere and Serbian victims nowhere."1

The crimes that Croats and Muslims perpetrated against each other or against Serbs made it into the news only infrequently, and were accorded little or no critical attention by commentators, editorialists, and policy makers. Consider this incomplete sampling:

- In November 1991, twenty-seven Serbian villages in Croatia were given forty-eight-hour evacuation notices. Seventeen of these villages were then burned to the ground by Croatian troops.[2]
- Bosnian Serb women in the town of Novigrad said they were repeatedly gang-raped by local Croatian militia, some of whom were neighbors. One woman, Gordana, age thirty-six, describes her ordeal: "When I screamed, one of them smashed my head against the floor. It all lasted three hours. Afterward they said I would have an Ustashe [Croatian fascist] child."[3]
- A 1992 BBC filming of an ailing elderly "Bosnian prisoner-of-war in a Serb concentration camp" proved, in his later identification by relatives, to be retired Yugoslav Army officer Branko Velec, a Bosnian Serb held in a Muslim detention camp.[4]
- Among the wounded "Muslim toddlers and infants" hit by sniper fire while on a Sarajevo bus in August 1992 were a number of Serb children. This was not revealed until some time later. "Television reporters identified the funeral of one of the victims as Muslim. But the Orthodox cross and other unmistakable Serbian Orthodox funeral rituals told a different story."[5]
- When thousands of Serb civilians in eastern Herzegovina were expelled from their homes in February 1993, the Western media carried not a word about it. Every Serbian home between Metkovic and Konjic in the Neretva valley was burned to the ground. "In contrast to the endless stories about the plight of Muslim civilians in eastern Bosnia, we were not treated to a single story about the plight of Serbs in eastern Herzegovina."[6]
- Also in February 1993, the Associated Press, citing only a Bosnian government source, reported that starving Muslims in eastern Bosnia were resorting to cannibalism. The story earned instant headlines in the United States. Little attention was accorded to the emphatic denial made the following day by UN officials in Bosnia, who hurried to the

supposedly starving villagers only to find them in possession of food supplies, including livestock and chickens.[7]

- In early August 1993, a photo caption in the *New York Times* described a Croat woman from Posusje (Bosnia) grieving for a son killed in Serbian attacks. In fact, Posusje was the scene of bloody fighting between Muslims and Croats, resulting in thirty-four Bosnian Croat deaths, including the son of the woman in the picture. The killings were done by Muslim forces. Serbs were not involved. The Times printed an obscure retraction the following week.[8]
- On August 6 1993, the Times ran another picture of a weeping mother, this time accompanied by her two children. The caption read "Bosnian Serb forces demand homes in the Central Bosnian town of Prozor to be vacated by August 4. ..." In fact, Prozor was controlled by Croat forces. Serb units were nowhere near the town.

- In October 1993, masked Croat soldiers killed an estimated eighty Muslims in the central Bosnian village of Stupni Do. Survivors reported witnessing the Croats throwing the corpses of children, women and elderly civilians into the burning buildings.[9] Despite threats from Croatian troops, a Swedish UN military unit managed to reach the village to determine what exactly happened. As reported in the *New York Times*, they witnessed the aftermath of "the wrath of the Croatian nationalist soldiers who came to rape, to cut throats, to smash children's skulls, to machine-gun whole families."[10] Brigadier Angus Ramsay of Britain, chief of staff of the UN's Bosnia command, called it "a disgusting war crime," and named the perpetrators as the Bobovac Brigade of the Croatian nationalist army in Bosnia, known as the HVO.[11]
- In early November 1993, Bosnian Muslim troops stormed through an isolated Croatian district north of Sarajevo, sending thousands of civilians fleeing into the countryside and leaving others cowering in cellars. There were widespread reports of rapes, beatings, and looting. Some 2,000 Croats found temporary safety in Serbian-held territory southeast of Varres (north of Sarajevo). The Serbs expected a total of 15,000 refugees whom they were making efforts to transport to the port city of Split in Croatia.[12]

- In August 1995, Croatian troops, fully backed by the US military, rampaged through Serbian Krajina, massacring hundreds of civilians. UN patrols disinterred numerous fresh unmarked graves containing bodies of villagers. The European Union reported, “Evidence of atrocities, an average of six corpses per day, continues to emerge. ... Many have been shot in the back of the head or had throats slit, others have been mutilated. ... Serb lands continue to be torched and looted.”[13]
- In January 1996 Croatian forces slaughtered 181 Serb civilians who lived in Mrkonic Grad, a town in northwest Bosnia near the Croatian border. The murderers left fascist graffiti over the entire town. The graves were subsequently exhumed and all the victims were identified by name. This story went almost completely unreported.[14]
- Once the Sarajevo suburb of Ilidza was turned over to the Muslim-Croat Federation in March 1996, “hundreds of Muslim thugs”—as the *New York Times* called them—"armed with guns, knives and grenades,” swaggered through the streets, preying upon the 3,000 or so Serbs, mostly elderly or ill, still living there. The gangs “hang signs of ownership on homes they never saw before and cart off people’s belongings while the owners are out shopping for eggs. ... The anarchy officials feared from the transfer of Serb-held suburbs has come true here.”[15]
- In its first case focusing exclusively on rape, the UN’s International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) prosecuted not a Serb but a Bosnian Croat paramilitary chief, sentencing him to ten years in prison for failing to stop subordinates’ 1993 rape of a Bosnian Muslim woman.[16]

The key story that set much of world opinion against the Serbs was the siege of Sarajevo which lasted, on and off, from April 1992 to February 1994. It was described as “the worst single crime against a community in Europe since Auschwitz,” by one British commentator.[17] On-the-scene observers were of a different opinion. Former deputy commander of the US European command, Charles Boyd reported: “[T]he image of Sarajevo, starved, battered and besieged [by the Bosnian Serb army], is a precious

tool for Bosnia's [Muslim] government. As the government was commemorating the 1,000th day of the siege, local markets were selling oranges, lemons and bananas at prices only slightly higher than in Western Europe. Gasoline was 35 per cent cheaper than in Germany."[18]

Bosnian Muslim forces at Sarajevo, UN observers noted, were often the first to begin the daily artillery barrages, firing on Serb targets and Serb neighborhoods in order to provoke a response and trigger Western military intervention. A failure to make any distinction as to who was firing at whom implied that the Serbs were the sole culprits.[19]

About ninety thousand Serbs chose to remain in Sarajevo during the siege. Bosnian Serb forces had offered safe passage to all civilians. With noncombatants out of the way, especially women and children, the Serbs would be able to treat Sarajevo as a purely military target. Izetbegovic dismissed the offer for the same reason, stating that without children Sarajevo would be wide open to Serb attack. Furthermore, civilian suffering was an important propaganda theme. So Muslim troops prevented anyone from leaving the Muslim-controlled part of Sarajevo, in effect, creating a siege within the siege. "This fact does not diminish the guilt of the Serbs, but it undermines the alleged innocence of Muslim authorities regarding the suffering and dying of civilians."[20]

French general Philippe Morillon, former commander of UNPROFOR, emphatically blamed the Bosnian Muslim government for failing to lift the siege of Sarajevo. In an interview with Lidove Noviny, a Prague daily, Morillon charged that the Bosnian government repeatedly refused to let UNPROFOR establish a ceasefire because it wanted to keep Sarajevo a focal point for world sympathy.[21] A British general, Sir Michael Rose, came to the same conclusion, noting in his memoir that the Muslim deputy commander was reluctant to sign the ceasefire even though "the Serbs had agreed to all of his government's ceasefire demands."[22]

The Serbs were repeatedly pilloried in the media for the infamous breadline and marketplace massacres in Sarajevo, in 1992, 1994, and 1995. In all three incidents, internal UN investigations revealed that Bosnian Muslim forces were responsible.[23] According to the report leaked on

French TV, Western intelligence knew that it was Muslim operatives who had bombed Bosnian civilians in the 1994 incident in order to induce NATO involvement. General Rose came to a similar conclusion after the first UN examination of the site.[24] International negotiator David Owen, who worked with Cyrus Vance, admitted in his memoir that the NATO powers knew all along that Muslim forces repeatedly hit neutral targets in order to stop relief flights and refocus world attention on Sarajevo. While all such fire was usually attributed to the Serbs, “no seasoned observer in Sarajevo doubts for a moment that Muslim forces have found it in their interest to shell friendly targets.”[25] On more than one occasion, French troops at Sarajevo caught Muslim snipers shooting at Muslim civilians in attempts to blame Serbian attackers.[26]

An eye-witness stated on Muslim television in Sarajevo that the Serbs must have devised a new type of shell that made no noise when fired, for nobody heard the “shell” that hit the marketplace in 1994. A correspondent of the Danish daily Information also maintained that there was no artillery firing that day. An American physician, appearing on CNN, noted that the wounds on victims brought to her were not “fresh.”

Other physicians went on record saying that some of the bodies found in the Sarajevo marketplace had already been dead for some time. The British periodical Defence and Foreign Affairs learned that, just a day before, the Croats and Muslims had carried out an exchange of the dead.[27]

At a later press conference, UN spokesman Bill Aikmann reported that the Muslim militia sealed off the Sarajevo marketplace immediately after the explosion, denying UN personnel access for several hours. Later it was not possible to find any shrapnel from the shell that would have allowed identification of its origin. Moreover, the Muslim Bosnian government resisted setting up a mixed commission of inquiry as demanded by the Serbs, giving as their reason that they would not cooperate with murderers. In an official communique published in Zagreb, the United Nations spoke of the “impossibility of ascribing the shell of February 5 to either of the two sides....”[28]

No matter. The well-timed, well-staged incidents served their purpose; the outraged denials by Bosnian Serb officials were to no avail. Given sensational play in the Western media, the “Serbian massacre of innocent civilians” caused an international outcry, inducing the United Nations to go along with the US-sponsored sanctions against Yugoslavia in 1992, the beginning of NATO's air attacks on Bosnian Serb military units in 1994, and the carpet bombing of all territory held by Bosnian Serbs in 1995.[29]

While press coverage focused on the Serbian siege of Sarajevo, the much heavier and “nearly incessant bombardment of Mostar” by Croatian forces, causing “far greater human and physical damage than Sarajevo,” according to Susan Woodward, received almost no world attention, and demonstrated how thoroughly the media could be managed.[30] Referring to Mostar seven years later, even Christopher Hitchens, who vigorously promotes the demonized view of the Serbs, was moved to write: “The wreckage of an entire city and the ruins of an entire society is still open to view. The bridges are down, the minarets are amputated, many parts of town are total rubble. All this done by Croatian government forces in plain view of NATO.”[31]

SHARING BLAME

The amount of destruction wreaked upon the lovely city of Dubrovnik by the Yugoslav army was greatly exaggerated in press reports. Most of the old city survived undamaged. But Croat defense forces bear a share of the responsibility for the shelling that did take place. As even a strongly anti-Milosevic writer observed: “They were returning fire from gun and small artillery positions on the old town walls, goading the JNA [Yugoslav National Army] into firing upon them. They were cunningly exploiting international outrage for military purposes. When one photographer attempted to record the [gunner] nests on the old town walls, his camera was confiscated by the Croat National Guard and the film destroyed.”[32]

Regarding the deaths of Serbs in Krajina and elsewhere during the Croatian war, an ICTY report stated that, “at least 150 Serb civilians were summarily executed, and many hundreds disappeared.” The crimes included looting, burning, and indiscriminate shelling of civilian populations. “In a widespread and systematic manner,” the report goes on, “Croatian troops committed murder and other inhumane acts upon and against Croatian Serbs.”[33] But where were US and British leaders—and their faithful television crews—when these atrocities were being committed?

The massive ethnic cleansing of Krajina Serbs by Croat forces earned hardly a cluck of disapproval from Western leaders. Indeed, as Raymond Bonner notes, “Questions still remain about the full extent of United States involvement. In the course of the three-year investigation into the [Krajina] assault, the United States has failed to provide critical evidence requested by the tribunal, according to tribunal documents and officials, adding to suspicion among some there that Washington is uneasy about the investigation.”[34]

To be sure, there also were Serb atrocities. Serb and Yugoslav forces bear major responsibility for the destruction wreaked upon Vukovar and much of the responsibility for Sarajevo. Serb paramilitaries and “special units,” including ones that sported nationalist “Chetnik” insignia, were guilty of summary killings around Srebrenica. In the small village of Lovinac five Croat civilians, including a man in his seventies, were killed. A Chetnik operation in Northern Kordun left dozens of bodies of Croatian villagers rotting, according to Misha Glenny. Twenty-four elderly people in Vocin and Hum, two villages in western Slavonia, were killed by retreating Chetniks. Some Croats who stayed in Stara Tenja were reportedly murdered by Arkan's paramilitary, “provoking bitter protests from the local Serbs.”[35] Later on, Serbian attacks on a KLA stronghold in the central Drenica region of Kosovo reportedly killed forty-six people, including eleven children.[36] Dozens were killed in Bela Crkva, one of six reported massacres by Serb paramilitaries in Kosovo.[37] Serb reservists set fire to a beautiful Catholic monastery in Croatia, near the Montenegrin border, and no doubt other structures in other places. Military operations conducted by many of these units were often beyond the control of their superiors.[38]

Violations of the Geneva convention can be ascribed to Serb forces, especially Chetnik paramilitary units and irregulars. What we might question is the publicized size, scope, and frequency of Serbian crimes, the unreliable nature of so many reports, and the one-sided spin that Western leaders and media commentators put on the issue so persistently that evidence of atrocities committed by Croats and Bosnian Muslims never enter the equation, even if occasionally publicized.

Lieutenant-General Satish Nambiar, former deputy chief of staff of the Indian army and head of UN forces deployed in Yugoslavia 1992-93 offered this observation: “Portraying the Serbs as evil and everybody else as good was not only counterproductive but also dishonest. According to my experience all sides were guilty but only the Serbs would admit that they were no angels while the others would insist that they were.”

With twenty-eight thousand UN military personnel under his field command, and with “constant contacts with UNHCR and the International Red Cross officials,” Nambiar and his officers still did not witness anything resembling genocide, although summary killings and massacres were perpetrated “on all sides” as is “typical of such conflict conditions.” He concludes, “I believe none of my successors and their forces saw anything on the scale claimed by the media.”[39]

The moderated truths enunciated by observers like Lieutenant-General Nambiar, US Deputy Commander Boyd, General Morillon, General Rose, negotiator Owen, and various UN administrators and eyewitnesses cited above went largely unnoticed in the mass of Nazi-imaged, Serb-bashing stories broadcast unceasingly around the world.

Demonizing The Serbs

The media’s demonization of the Serbs was not merely the product of sloppy reportage and pack journalism. As we have seen in the previous chapter, stories occasionally appeared in the mainstream press that took note of atrocities by non-Serbian combatants, but these were accorded little significance by policy makers and commentators.

Why were the Serbs targeted? They were the largest and most influential nationality in the former Yugoslavia, with a proportionately higher percentage of Communist party membership than other nationalities.[1] They were the only ones to have given up an independent nation-state in order to enter into a unified state. Serbia and Montenegro remained the two republics most supportive of the federation. (A large portion of Montenegrins identify themselves linguistically and ethnically as Serbs.) Moreover, in the 1989 US-imposed elections, Serbs and Montenegrins supported the former Communists over the US-backed “democrats” in their respective republics. No wonder the Serbs were targeted as the enemy. And once so designated, they had their national rights trampled upon by the West, dismissed as the only Yugoslav nationality without a legitimate interest in the fate of their country.

The propaganda campaign to demonize the Serbs began early in the decade. One of the Slovene government's first acts after declaring independence in 1991 was to create a well-equipped media center that would distribute vivid reports about nonexistent battles, exaggerated casualty figures, and alleged Yugoslav army (Serbian) atrocities. By depicting the brief and limited conflict in the bloodiest terms imaginable, and portraying themselves as pro-West democrats struggling against Yugoslav Communist aggressors, the Slovenes hoped to marshal international support for their cause.[2] Not long after, the Croats and Muslims did the same by conjuring up images of a dehumanized Communist Serbian threat to Europe.[3]

One of the earliest propaganda campaigns during the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina came in 1991-93 when the Serbs were accused of pursuing an officially sanctioned policy of mass rape. Bosnian Serb forces were said to have raped from 20,000 to 100,000 Muslim women; the reports varied widely. The Bosnian Serb army numbered not more than 30,000 or so, many of whom were engaged in desperate military engagements. Common sense would dictate that these stories be treated with some skepticism. Instead, they were eagerly embraced by Western leaders and their media acolytes.

“Go forth and rape,” a Bosnian Serb commander supposedly publicly instructed his troops. The source of that widely circulated story could never be traced. The commander’s name was never produced. As far as we know, no such order was ever issued. The *New York Times* did belatedly run a tiny retraction, coyly allowing that “the existence of ‘a systematic rape policy’ by the Serbs remains to be proved.”[4]

Hearings held by the European Community’s Committee on Women’s Rights in February 1993 rejected the estimate of 20,000 Muslim rape victims because of the lack of evidence. At the hearings, representatives from the UN War Crimes Commission and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees concluded that not enough evidence could be found to sustain charges of a Serbian mass-rape campaign. At the same time, Amnesty International and the International Committee of the Red Cross concurrently declared that all sides had committed atrocities and rapes.[5]

A representative from Helsinki Watch noted that reports of massive Serbian rapes originated with the Bosnian Muslim and Croatian governments and had no credible support. Likewise, Nora Beloff, former chief correspondent of the London Observer, says she elicited “an admission from a senior German official that there is no direct evidence to support the wild figures of rape victims.” The official in charge of the Bosnian desk in the German Foreign Affairs Ministry admitted that all such rape reports came partly from the Izetbegovic government and partly from Caritas, a Catholic charity—that is, entirely from Muslim and Croat sources, without any corroboration from independent investigators.[6]

The media repeatedly referred to “rape camps” allegedly maintained by the Serbs as. part of a campaign of “ethnic breeding.” Thousands of captive Muslim women were reportedly impregnated and forced to give birth to Serbian children. But after hostilities ceased and UN troops occupied all of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the mass rape camps never materialized. The waves of pregnant victims supposedly treated at Bosnian hospitals, and the medical records of their treatment also never materialized. The handful of rape-produced births that actually came to light seemed to contradict the image of mass-rape pregnancies reported by Muslim authorities and Western journalists.[7] An Agence France-Presse news item reported that in Sarajevo,

“Bosnian investigators have learned of just one case of a woman who gave birth to a child after being raped.” And Amnesty International “has never succeeded in speaking with any of the pregnant women.”[8]

It has been suggested that these women were so few in number because they were unwilling to come forward, given the stigmatization that their culture places upon rape victims. But provision was made by international aid agencies to render confidential assistance to them. The women were never asked to go public, only to be interviewed anonymously and receive medical care, as some did. In any case, if 20,000 or more rape victims so successfully kept their plight a secret, how did Bosnian and Croatian government officials and Western journalists know about them? What actual evidence did they have of mass rapes involving tens of thousands of women, and why did they never produce it?

This is not to say that no rapes occurred. Eight years after the mass-rape stories were circulated, an unidentified Muslim Bosnian woman testified before the International Criminal Tribunal that she and other women had been held captive by Serb paramilitaries and repeatedly raped for a number of weeks in the summer of 1992. Some fifty women were said to have been detained, but the trial testimony of no other woman was reported in the AP stories. The case was against two Bosnian Serb paramilitaries accused of running a “network of rape camps” southeast of Sarajevo.[9]

Sometimes the press outdid itself in its tabloid concoctions, as when the BBC informed its millions of listeners that Serb snipers were paid 2,700 FF for every child they killed—or when the London Daily Mirror reported that a Bosnian woman died “after being forced to give birth to a dog.” Variations on this bizarre and biologically incredible story were carried also in Germany’s *Bild am Sonntag* and Italy’s *La Repubblica*, with lurid accounts of how fiendish Serbian gynecologists implanted canine fetuses in the woman’s womb.[10] The dog story was also embraced by an obscure West German parliamentary deputy, Stefan Schwarz, who gained instant fame by telling gruesome tales in the Bundestag about Serbian burnings, castrations, the roasting of children in ovens, and the use of poison gas. In January 1993, Schwarz spoke of the “Serbian successors to Mengele” who planted dog embryos in Muslim women. He announced the arrival of a videotape

that would corroborate his claim. Only a year later did he admit that no such tape existed. Nor did he produce any evidence to support his other horror stories.[11] Nevertheless Schwarz's popularity with the press was undiminished. Lack of evidence was irrelevant against the images evoked of sadistic death-camp Serbo-Nazi medical experiments.

Along with the references to "rape camps" were the equally unsubstantiated stories about Serbian "death camps" in northern Bosnia. These tales were launched by reporter Roy Gutman, who invited comparisons to the extermination camps run by the Nazis during World War II. The first of these articles, appearing on the front page of Newsday under the large headline "Bosnian Death Camps," opened with: "The Serbian conquerors of northern Bosnia founded two concentration camps where more than a thousand civilians have been killed or died of hunger, and thousands are being kept until death follows ... In one of the camps, over a thousand men are locked up in metal cages." Bodies were burned in cremation furnaces, then turned into animal feed. Gutman quotes someone described as an ex prisoner who says: "I saw ten young men lying in a trench. Their throats were slit, their noses cut off and their genitals torn."[12] Though seriously lacking in confirmed sources, Gutman's stories were eagerly picked up, causing an international outcry that helped mobilize world opinion against the Serbs. Similar reports soon appeared in British newspapers, along with charges that Bosnian Serbs had executed more than seventeen thousand Muslim and Croatian prisoners.

Gutman was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his stories. But after gaining access to all of Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN forces failed to unearth any evidence to support the existence of these death camps, no sign of hundreds of metal cages, cremation furnaces, or mass graves of starved and mutilated corpses. Here was a remarkable nonappearance story that went conveniently unnoticed by the press—save for British journalist Joan Phillips who decided to retrace Gutman's steps. She discovered that he had visited the Serbian camps at Omarska and Trnopolje only after publishing the articles in which he had described them as death camps. She also discovered that Trnopolje was not a death camp and probably not entirely a detention camp. Many of its inmates entered of their own volition to escape the fighting in nearby villages. And Omarska was run by civil authorities as

a kind of temporary holding center. Gutman's story about the Omarska camp, Phillips reports, rested on the testimony of one man who admitted that he had not witnessed any killings himself, but once saw "eight bodies covered with blankets."[13]

Phillips also ascertained that Gutman's article on the camp at Brcko, where 1,350 people were supposedly slaughtered, hinged on the testimony of one individual who stated he had been imprisoned there, with "confirmation" only from a notoriously unreliable Muslim source within the Bosnian government.[14] Gutman did journey to the detention site at Manjaca. He was allowed to tour the camp and interview the prisoners, who complained about the food. He mentioned no facts that could relate to torture or executions, and actually noted that the Serbian army seemed to be respecting the Geneva Convention.[15] After investigating these sites herself, Phillips reports that the International Red Cross had access to Manjaca from the start, and many of the prisoners had not been involved in fighting but were being held for prisoner exchange, just as was happening to Serbs in Muslim and Croatian detention camps.

If these various sites really were death camps would the Serbs have left them open to inspection by the International Red Cross and Western media? To be sure, none of the camps qualified as luxury spas. Prisoners were crowded into incommodious quarters, sometimes poorly fed, and some were beaten or otherwise abused, as was also the case in the Muslim and Croatian camps (and in prisons throughout the world), the only difference being that the Muslim and Croatian sites went unnoticed by Western journalists.

In 1992, Western media gave top exposure to photographs purporting to be of maltreated Bosnian Muslim prisoners in Serbian "concentration camps." Such photos were subsequently proven to be of dubious credibility. At Tmopolje's refugee camp, journalists and photographers deliberately placed themselves within a small barbed-wired enclosure that fenced in a utility shed, while the Muslim men stood outside the enclosure. Yet the impression left by the photographs was that the men were behind barbed wire. A severely emaciated man, subsequently identified as Fikret Alic, prominently displayed on the cover of Time and numerous other

publications, evoked the awful image of a Nazi-type death camp. Left unmentioned was that Alic was not imprisoned behind barbed wire. Also left unnoticed were all the healthy well-fed individuals standing around him. Another emaciated man, purportedly a Muslim prisoner, appearing on the cover of Newsweek, was eventually identified as Slobodan Konjevic, a Serb arrested for looting. Konjevic had been suffering from tuberculosis for ten years.[16]

The double standard was operative throughout the Croatian and Bosnian conflicts. Why were war-crime charges leveled against the president of Serbian Krajina, Milan Martic, with secret indictments against the entire government of Krajina, but not one charge for the Croatian rampage through Krajina? Where were the TV cameras when Muslims slaughtered hundreds of Serbs near Srebrenica? asked John Ranz, chair of a Holocaust survivors organization.[17] The official line, faithfully parroted in the US media, was that Serbs committed all the atrocities at Srebrenica.

Speaking of which, during the course of his special documentary, “Srebrenica,” aired on PBS in 1999 and again in early 2000, Bill Moyers stated more than once that 7,414 Bosnian Muslims were executed by Bosnian Serb forces in the Srebrenica area.[18] One might wonder how such a chaotic war could offer up such a precise figure. Moyers filmed several busloads of Muslim women and children who could not account for their men. The latter had been separated from their families by Bosnian Serb militia and reportedly walked up into the hills and shot. “Thousands of men and boys were killed,” Moyers concludes. Thousands? “Hundreds were killed in a village nearby,” he adds—though he gives no indication of having visited the nearby village nor does he offer an interview of anyone from that village. None of the Muslim women he filmed reported any rapes —or at least Moyers makes no mention of it.

In only one instance does Moyers allow the suggestion that atrocities might have been committed by Muslims as well as Serbs. This comes when he interviews a Muslim military leader who says, “Both sides respected the Geneva convention and both sides sometimes did not respect the Geneva convention“ Toward the end of the hour-long program, Moyers makes a startling but quickly passing admission: “To date, physicians have identified

just seventy bodies." To explain the vast discrepancy between seventy and 7,414, he asserts—as a statement of settled fact—that the Serbs reburied many bodies in secondary graves to conceal them. Moyers offers no details as to how, where, and when the Serbs could have buried and then again located, disinterred, and reburied the other 7,344 bodies in the midst of a difficult and chaotic military campaign—without being detected. Nor does he explain why the initial sites, showing evidence of many disinterred graves, could not be found, nor why secondary mass graves were so impossible to locate. When it came to hiding bodies, what did the Serbs know the second time that they kept forgetting to do the first time?

Moyers further claims that in Tuzla the Serbs stored "more than a thousand bodies in a mine." With the fighting long over, it would have been easy enough for him and his camera crew to go to Tuzla and get some footage of the thousand bodies stacked in the mine along with eyewitness testimony of what happened. To my knowledge, no evidence has ever been produced to support that story.

Two British correspondents noted some neglected earlier events relating to Srebrenica, specifically that the Serbian siege had been preceded by a large-scale Muslim attack which razed fifty Serbian villages in the neighboring communes of Srebrenica and Bratunac, and massacred more than 1,200 Serbian women, children and elderly people, with more than 3,000 left wounded.[19] These events went unmentioned in Moyer's special report on Srebrenica, and in most other media.

A report that the Serbs used CS, a poison gas, appeared in Western news in September 1992. There was no evidence that the Serbs or anyone else did any such thing in Yugoslavia—no gas canisters, no contaminated sites or corpses, no suffering victims, no eyewitness reports.[20] But this did not prevent the story from enjoying a brisk, albeit brief, circulation.

Among the public relations firms that played a crucial role in demonizing the Serbs was Ruder & Finn, a paid representative at one time or another for Croatia, Muslim Bosnia, and the Albanian parliamentary opposition in Kosovo. Ruder & Finn's director, James Harff, boasted of disseminating sensationalistic reports that caused a dramatic increase in public support for

US intervention in Bosnia. As Harff told French journalist Jacques Merlino in April 1993, he was proudest of how his firm had manipulated Jewish public opinion. It was an achievement of some delicacy since Croatian president Franjo Tudjman "was very careless in his book, *Wastelands of Historical Truth,*" for which "he could be found guilty of anti-Semitism." Bosnian president Alija Izetbegovic also posed serious image problems because his book *The Islamic Declaration*, "revealed too much support for a Muslim fundamentalist state. Moreover, the pasts of Croatia and Bosnia were marked by real and cruel anti-Semitism," Harff admitted. "Tens of thousands of Jews perished in Croatian camps, so there was every reason for intellectuals and Jewish organizations to be hostile toward the Croats and the [Muslim] Bosnians. Our challenge was to reverse this attitude and we succeeded masterfully."[21] After Newsday published Roy Gutman's stories about the reputed Serbian death camps, Harff's people were able to mobilize several major Jewish organizations—the B'nai Brith Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee, and the American Jewish Congress:

> That was a tremendous coup. When the Jewish organizations entered the game on the side of the [Muslim] Bosnians, we could promptly equate the Serbs with the Nazis in the public mind. Nobody understood what was happening in Yugoslavia. ... By a single move we were able to present a simple story of good guys and bad guys which would hereafter play itself. ... Almost immediately there was a clear change of language in the press, with use of words with high emotional content such as "ethnic cleansing" and "concentration camps," which evoke images of Nazi Germany and the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

When Merlino pointed out, "When you did this, you had no proof that what you said was true. All you had were two Newsday articles," Harff replied: "Our work is not to verify information. ... Our work is to accelerate the circulation of information favorable to us. ... We are professionals. We had a job to do and we did it. We are not paid to moralize."

Without wishing to diminish Harff's sense of achievement, I would point out that Ruder & Finn was so successful not primarily because of its "masterful" promotional ploys. It did what many public relations firms would do: manipulate images, bend information in serviceable ways, send out press releases, try to plant stories, target key groups, lobby Congress and the like. What made the firm's efforts so effective was the eager

receptivity of Western media, who—taking their cues from officialdom—were themselves creating an anti-Serb climate of opinion many months before Ruder & Finn's PR campaign.

This nearly monopolistic communication tide was assisted by certain well-financed “humanitarian” groups like Doctors Without Borders, peace groups like Women In Black, and “human rights” groups like Human Rights Watch, along with the various Green Party organizations throughout Europe and North America, British Laborites, French socialists, German social democrats, and the inevitable sprinkling of well-infiltrated ultra-left grouplets that are forever settling scores with “Stalinism,” with Milosevic as the “last Stalinist.” Also to be numbered among the supporters of humanitarian bombings of defenseless civilian populations were the various half-informed intellectuals and luminaries whose moralizing proclivities were activated in the quick-cooked crusade against Serbia. These included feminists, pacifists, and “left” anti-Communists such as Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Gunter Grass, Octavio Paz, Karl Popper, Vanessa Redgrave, Salman Rushdie, Catharine MacKinnon, Todd Gitlin, and of course Susan Sontag—so dedicated to fighting the ghost of Stalin or the ghost of Hitler that they unintentionally or by design end up serving a living, global imperialism.

Because of international sanctions, the Yugoslav government was unable to hire a public relations firm as did the Croat, Muslim, and Albanian separatists.[22] But even if they had, the Yugoslav side of the story would have been cold-shouldered by the corporate-owned international media for the same reason the Serb-hating side was so warmly championed. The charge of genocide was reiterated so relentlessly in regard to Bosnia that evidence became irrelevant. George Kenney, one of the framers of US policy in the Balkans under the Bush administration summed it up: “The US government doesn't have proof of any genocide and anyone reading the press critically can see the paucity of evidence, despite interminably repeated claims and bloodcurdling speculation.”[23]

On To Kosovo

With four of the republics—Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina—having broken away, all that remained of a truncated reconstituted Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was Serbia and Montenegro. Within Serbia itself were the two autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina. Kosovo was the next target.

Let us begin with some history. During World War II, the Albanian fascist militia in western Kosovo expelled seventy thousand Serbs and brought in about an equal number of Albanians from Albania. In northeastern Kosovo, the Nazi 21st SS division, manned by Kosovo Albanian volunteers, massacred thousands of Serbs and forced many others to flee the province. Though never much of a fighting force, the division did contribute to the Holocaust by participating in the roundup and deportation of Jews from Kosovo and Macedonia.[1]

Hoping to placate Albanian nationalist sentiment after the war, Yugoslav Communist leader Josip Broz Tito made Kosovo-Metohija an autonomous region and, in 1963, an autonomous province but still part of Serbia. The hundred thousand or so Serbs who had been forced out of Kosovo-Metohija during the war were not allowed to return. And in 1969, the historically Serbian name of Metohija was dropped and the province was designated the "Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo," with only nominal ties to the rest of Serbia.[2] The 1974 constitution gave additional powers not only to the Kosovars but to the various republics, "crippling the institutional and material power of the federal government. Tito's authority substituted for this weakness until his death in 1980," after which the centrifugal forces began to gain momentum, writes Peter Gowan.[3]

Tito did little to discourage the Albanian campaign to ethnically cleanse Kosovo of non-Albanians. Between 1945 and 1998, Kosovo's population of Serbs, Roma, Turks, Gorani (Muslim Slavs), Montenegrins, and several other ethnic groups shrank from some 60 per cent to about 15 per cent. Meanwhile, ethnic Albanians grew from 40 to 85 per cent, benefiting from

a high birth rate and much more from the heavy influx of immigrants from Albania and the continuing expulsion of Serbs. In sum, the first ethnic cleansings of Kosovo, both during and after World War II, saw the Serbs as victims not victimizes. The dramatic shift in population balance fueled the Albanian claim to exclusive ownership of the province. In 1987, in an early untutored moment of truth, the *New York Times* ran David Binder's report on Kosovo:

Ethnic Albanians in the [provincial] government have manipulated public funds and regulations to take over land belonging to Serbs. ... Slavic Orthodox churches have been attacked, and flags have been tom down. Wells have been poisoned and crops burned. Slavic boys have been knifed, and some young ethnic Albanians have been told by their elders to rape Serbian girls. ... As the Slavs flee the protracted violence, Kosovo is becoming what ethnic Albanian nationalists have been demanding for years ... an 'ethnically pure' Albanian region.[4]

Other observers offered similar accounts: "Kosovo Albanian [separatists] persecuted the Serbs. They desecrated their churches, stole or destroyed their property, employed duress to get them to sell their holdings, and engaged in other acts designed to force them to leave Kosovo. Even Serbian professionals ... were told, as a condition of their continued employment, that they must learn Albanian."[5]

As an autonomous province of the Serb republic, Kosovo enjoyed far more extensive rights and powers within the FRY than were allowed to national minorities in any West European state or the United States. Kosovo was allowed to have its own supreme court and its own Albanian flag. University education was in Albanian, with Albanian textbooks and teachers. There were also Albanian newspapers, magazines, television, radio, movies, and sporting and cultural events. All education below the university level was exclusively in Albanian, a language radically different from Serbo-Croat. With only 8 per cent of Yugoslavia's population, Kosovo was allocated up to 30 per cent of the federal development budget, including 24 per cent of World Bank development credits. "The Kosovo authorities, it was discovered later, used large sums from these funds to buy up land from Serbs and give it to Albanians."[6] Because of corruption and

poor planning, Kosovo persistently lagged far behind other segments of the FRY, despite the largesse bestowed upon it.

Repeated appeals from besieged Serbs in Kosovo went unheeded in Belgrade—until 1987, when the new president of the Serbian Communist party, Slobodan Milosevic, used the issue to strengthen the party faction that supported a firmer line against Albanian secessionists.[7] Two years later, at Milosevic's initiative, the federal government repealed the 1974 federal constitution that had allowed Kosovo to exercise a de facto veto over federal policies. Large numbers of Albanians who refused to accept Belgrade's reassertion of authority were fired from state employment. Albanians began organizing alternative institutions and boycotting federal ones, including elections. Kosovo Albanian separatists refused to pay their federal customs duties. Tensions ran high but remained well short of open warfare.

Political confrontation escalated into military conflict through the efforts of the violently separatist “Kosovo Liberation Army.” The KLA's origins remain murky. Some place its beginnings in 1996, when a letter announcing its formation was sent to the press. The letter also claimed credit for a February 1996 massacre of Krajina Serb refugees who had resettled in Kosovo after fleeing Croatia. At first the KLA was an odd assortment of grouplets, including gangsters, mercenaries, brothel owners, fascists, and even some who claimed to be followers of Albania's former Marxist leader Enver Hoxha.[8] As late as 1998, US officials—at least publicly—were denouncing the KLA as a terrorist organization. Listen to US special envoy to Bosnia, Robert Gelbard: “We condemn very strongly terrorist actions in Kosovo. The UCK [KLA] is without any question a terrorist group.”[9]

The KLA directed its terror campaign against a variety of Serbian targets in Kosovo, including dozens of police stations, police vehicles, a local headquarters of the Socialist party, and Serbian villagers, farmers, officials, and professionals—in an effort to provoke reprisals, radicalize other Kosovo Albanians, and raise the level of conflict.

The KLA also targeted Albanians who opposed the violent secessionist movement, or were members of the Socialist Party of Serbia or who in

other ways professed a loyalty to Yugoslavia or loyalty to the Republic of Serbia. The KLA assassinated Albanians who were employed in Serbian or FRY public services, including police inspectors, forest service workers, postal employees, and public utility workers.[10] In 1996-98, more than half the victims of KLA terrorist attacks in Kosovo-Metohija were ethnic Albanian "collaborators." Many Kosovo Albanians fearfully adopted a passive attitude or grudgingly went along.[11] According to reports from the US Observer Mission (State Department), KLA representatives had kidnapped persons, including Albanians, who went to the police. They killed Albanian villagers and burnt their homes if they did not join the organization—a campaign of terror that boldly escalated during the NATO bombings of 1999.[12]

A dozen current or former KLA officials, a former Albanian diplomat, a former Albanian police official who worked with the KLA, and a number of Western diplomats have all testified that KLA leaders purged and assassinated potential rivals including other leaders within the KLA itself. By May 2000, twenty-three KLA commanders were shot dead by other elements within the KLA. At least a dozen of these hits reportedly were ordered by KLA chief Hashim Thaci (friend of Bernard Kouchner of Doctors Without Borders and NATO general Wesley Clark), aided by the secret police of Albania itself[13]

Meanwhile, Western leaders shoved aside the civilian Kosovo Democratic League (a somewhat less extreme organization than the KLA), and nonseparatist representatives of the Kosovo Albanian community who sought a peaceful diplomatic solution to the conflict with Belgrade. "KLA leaders have been accused of assassinating moderate Kosovo Albanians ..." notes Wayne Madsen. In fact, according to Albanian State Television, the KLA had sentenced to death in absentia Irahim Rugova, the democratically elected president of the Republic of Kosovo. (The KLA boycotted the election he won in 1998.)[14] In early 1999 it was reported that Rugova had been murdered by the Serbs. In fact, he was alive and surfaced in Belgrade, where he remained in seclusion, out of fear of the KLA.[15]

KLA fighters saluted with a clenched fist to the forehead, uncomfortably reminiscent of the 21st SS division and fascist militia of World War II. To

sanitize its image, the organization eventually changed to the more traditional open-palm salute.[16] The KLA's military commander, Agim Ceku, was a former brigadier general in the Croatian army. An "ethnic cleanser" in his own right, Ceku had commanded the Croatian offensive against Krajina that killed hundreds and destroyed more than ten thousand Serbian homes. Another KLA leader, Xhavit Haliti, was not even from Kosovo, but from Albania proper, and a former officer of the dreaded Albanian secret police, the Sigurimi, an organization that has committed numerous human rights violations within Albania.[17]

In addition, the KLA was a longtime and big-time player in the multi-billion-dollar international drug trafficking that reached throughout Europe and into the United States, according to Europol (the European Police Organization), Germany's Federal Criminal Agency, France's Geopolitical Observatory of Drugs, and Jane's Intelligence Review. Even Christopher Hill, US chief negotiator and architect of the Rambouillet agreement, felt compelled to criticize the KLA for its dealings in drugs.[18] A 1995 advisory from the US Drug Enforcement Administration stated that "certain members of the ethnic Albanian community in the Serbian region of Kosovo have turned to drug trafficking in order to finance their separatist activities."[19]

At the same time, KLA leaders offered no stated social program designed to help the common population. Their agenda in its totality seemed to be a Kosovo completely independent from Yugoslavia, cleansed of all non-Albanians, and joined to a "Greater Albania." This Greater Albania is to include additional portions of southern Serbia, and parts of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Greece.[20]

Developments in Kosovo resembled CIA covert operations in Indochina, Central America, Haiti, and Afghanistan, where rightist assassins and mercenaries were financed in part by the drug trade.[21] Within a year KLA rebels were magically transmuted by Western officials from terrorists and drug dealers into "freedom fighters" who supposedly represented the broad interests of all Kosovo Albanians. In 1998, the KLA experienced what the *New York Times* called a "rapid and startling growth," which included considerable numbers of mercenaries from Germany and the United States,

who sometimes assumed leadership positions.[22] The KLA was given training sites and generous supplements of aid and arms by Germany, the United States, Albania, and Islamic fundamentalist organizations—enough to transform it from a rag-tag assortment into a well-financed force equipped with some of the most advanced arms.[23] In 2000, CIA intelligence agents admitted to the London Sunday Times to having been training, equipping, and supporting KLA fighters as early as 1998—well before the NATO air strikes began—at the very time when the White House was pretending to be a mediator striving to resolve the conflict in Kosovo.

The KLA attacks continued for more than a year before triggering a concerted response from Yugoslav police and paramilitary. “In the summer of 1998,” Edward Herman writes, “Serbian security forces finally took the bait and went into the Kosovo countryside to root out the KLA.”[24] This conflict took about two thousand lives altogether from both sides, according to Kosovo Albanian sources. Yugoslavian sources put the figure at eight hundred, about the same number of killings as in Atlanta, Georgia, during the same period. Casualties occurred mostly in areas where the KLA was operating or suspected of operating. As is often the case, civilians took the brunt of the punishment, with the Yugoslav security forces inflicting the better part of such casualties, since theirs was the unenviable job of rooting out armed insurgents from unarmed sympathizers.[25]

This was also the period when the mass expulsions and ethnic cleansing of Kosovo were supposed to have begun. But Rollie Keith, who served as one of 1,380 monitors for an OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission [KVM], reports that there were no international refugees during the last five months of peace (November 1998 to March 1999), and the internally displaced persons driven into the hills or other villages by the fighting numbered only a few thousand in the weeks before the bombing commenced. According to Keith, KVM monitors observed that “the ceasefire situation was deteriorating with an increasing incidence of Kosovo Liberation Army provocative attacks on the Yugoslavian security forces.” These were “clear violations of the previous October's (Holbrooke-Milosevic) agreement” and brought about “a significant increase in Yugoslav retaliations.” But he insists, “I did not witness, nor did I have knowledge of any incidents of so-

called 'ethnic cleansing' and there certainly were no occurrences of 'genocidal policies' while I was with the KVM in Kosovo."[26]

KLA tactics were perfectly evident. It was very much in Yugoslavia's interest to observe a cease-fire, de-escalate the conflict, maintain the status quo, and avoid the destruction that NATO military action would bring. But it was in the KLA's interest to pursue the very opposite course: escalate the political conflict into a military one by acts of violence and terrorism that would eventually incite retaliation from Serb forces; avoid a negotiated settlement; keep the conflict brewing; make no mention of the assassinations and kidnappings perpetrated by its own fighters, but with the assistance of a willing Western press condemn the Yugoslav retaliations as the most horrific mass atrocity Europe has witnessed since the Nazis; and give NATO the needed pretext to wage its "humanitarian" assaults upon Yugoslavia. It was for this reason that the KLA repeatedly violated the cease-fire and sought to engage Yugoslav forces. This was its real goal rather than any realistic expectation of victory on the battlefield. In every respect, the strategy proved successful—in large part because the Western interventionists readily went along with it.[27]

The White House's claim that NATO resorted to force in Kosovo only after diplomacy failed was a gross falsehood, much like the ones used to justify intervention in Croatia and Bosnia. The NATO plan for military intervention was largely in place by the summer of 1998.[28] By late 1998, as the KLA's military position went from bad to worse, US leaders declared a "humanitarian crisis" and ordered Belgrade to withdraw FRY troops from Kosovo.

Then came another well-timed well-engineered story about Serbian atrocities, this time from William Walker, the US diplomat who first acquired notoriety in El Salvador as an apologist for US-sponsored assassins.[29] Walker led a troupe of journalists to view the bodies of forty-four men and one woman allegedly executed by Yugoslav police in the deserted Kosovo village of Racak in late January 1999. The story made worldwide headlines and was used to justify the NATO bombings that began two months later. But an Associated Press TV crew had actually filmed the battle that took place in Racak the previous day in which the

Serbian police killed a number of KLA fighters. The police did not seem to have anything to hide, having invited the press to witness the attack. After the battle, they were seen carting away the automatic weapons and heavy machine gun they had captured. By the next morning, with the police gone, the KLA were back in the village.

PRIVATE PENTAGON

Upgrading the KLA was a task accomplished in part by Military Professional Resources, Inc. (MPRI), a private company run by retired Pentagon brass. MPRI employs hundreds of former US military specialists, from Green Berets to helicopter pilots. It received a $400 million US State Department contract to train and equip the Bosnian Croat-Muslim Federation Army. MPRI also helped set up arms factories and military training schools in Bosnia staffed by Muslims and Croats.

The Reagan administration's secret Iran-Contra support of mercenaries in the war against Nicaragua caused quite a scandal when it was uncovered. This would not be the case with the Clinton administration's secret campaign to arm the Bosnian Muslims and then the KLA. The Freedom of Information Act does not apply to operations by private mercenary firms like MPRI. These companies can argue that such information is proprietary, hence, not open to public review. By privatizing government military involvement, these operations are put beyond the scope of public scrutiny and democratic accountability.[30]

Several major European papers such as *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde* challenged the story that Walker fed the press. They noted that it was sharply contradicted by the AP footage. The television crew saw no evidence of a mass execution, nor did the French journalist from *Le Monde* who came through later in the afternoon. Nor did Walker's own KVM monitors report any to him or anyone else. Other questions loomed: Why did journalists find so few cartridges and almost no blood around the ditch where the executions were supposed to have taken place? The village was

known to have been a KLA bastion, most of its denizens having fled long before the day of the fighting. How then could these forty-four men and one woman have been innocent Racak civilian residents? (The KLA had a small number of female fighters in their ranks.)

The Yugoslav government reacted with outrage to Walker's charges, and demanded that autopsies be performed on all the bodies in the face of efforts to bury them immediately “in conformity with Muslim practice.” Some time later, independent autopsy reports by Byelorussian and Finnish forensic experts were released. These unanimously concluded that all wounds had been inflicted from a distance, contradicting Walker's assertion that he saw “bodies with their faces blown away at close range in execution fashion.” There was no evidence of mutilation, and thirty-seven of the corpses had gunpowder residue on their hands, strongly suggesting that they were KLA combatants killed in action. Most likely they were then placed in the ditch that night or early morning by the returning KLA unit to create the impression of a massacre.[31] Walker then conveniently appeared on the scene with a small army of journalists to help turn a military defeat into a propaganda victory.

None of these facts ever registered with the US media. A year later, in February 2000, PBS's Frontline reported Racak just the way Walker would have wanted, raising none of the questions proffered by more critical eyewitnesses. Frontline falsely reported that children were found among the “massacred” although the footage showed only adult bodies. “Within days,” the narrator said, “the political landscape did change. Racak was decisive.” On that same program, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright announced that drastic action had to be taken when “something as terrible as Racak can happen.”[32] Indeed, three days after Walker's accusations, Albright issued a new demand: NATO military occupation of all of Yugoslavia, and autonomy for Kosovo. If Belgrade balked, then it would be bombed.[33] The stage was set for the diplomatic aggression launched at Rambouillet a few weeks later.

The Rambouillet Ambush

In February 1999, at meetings held in the French city of Rambouillet, the multiethnic Yugoslav delegation (composed of Kosovo Serbs, Roma, and Albanian and Egyptian representatives) met with US officials, including Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in the hope of reaching a negotiated settlement. Britain and France acted as co-chairs. The Yugoslavs had put forth a number of proposals, all of which went pretty much unreported in the Western media. These included:

- An agreement to stop hostilities in Kosovo and pursue a “peaceful solution through dialogue.”
- Guaranteed human rights for all citizens, and promotion of the cultural and linguistic identity of each national community.
- The facilitated return of all displaced citizens to their homes.
- The widest possible media freedom.
- A legislative assembly elected by proportional representation, with additional seats set aside for the various national communities. The assembly's responsibilities would include—along with budget and taxes—regulations governing education, environment, medical institutions, urban planning, agriculture, elections, property ownership, and economic, scientific, technological and social development.[1]

Belgrade's proposals were brushed aside as a basis for negotiation. Instead, the State Department produced a ninety-page document, “the Rambouillet Peace Agreement,” which demanded complete autonomy for Kosovo, the withdrawal of Yugoslav troops from the province, and occupation by NATO forces. Kosovo, a historically integral part of Serbia, would be accorded de facto independence. Still, the breakaway province would be able to exercise influence on Yugoslavia and Serbia by sending its representatives to Yugoslav and Serbian parliaments, ministerial cabinets, and courts, while Yugoslavia and Serbia would be barred from any say in Kosovo's affairs.

This was precisely the one-sided aspect of the 1974 constitution that had given the Albanians a veto over Serbian affairs through most of the 1980s. It left Kosovo effectively independent of Serbia and Yugoslavia, without Serbia and Yugoslavia being independent of Kosovo. In the name of autonomy, the Kosovo constitution would overrule the Yugoslav and

Serbian constitutions. Responding to strong popular demands, the Serbian parliament had voted to reduce Kosovo's autonomy to the more normal federal standards that had prevailed before 1974. This provoked a general Albanian boycott of Serbian institutions and a rejection of the very considerable democratic rights Kosovo still possessed. In any case, the oft-repeated charge that the ruthless dictator Milosevic stripped Kosovo of its autonomy is a serious distortion.[2]

The Rambouillet “agreement” obliged Yugoslavia to continue giving Kosovo direct aid and an “equitable” share of federal revenues, while having no say over federal resources and properties left behind in Kosovo. The “agreement” promised substantial aid to Kosovo but no assistance to the 650,000 refugees in Serbia, and no suspension of sanctions against Serbia.[3]

Under Rambouillet, a Civilian Implementation Mission (CIM), appointed by NATO, would rule Kosovo, redolent of US/EU colonial control over the Muslim-Croat Federation in Bosnia and Republika Srpska. The Chief of the CIM would have “the authority to issue binding directives to the Parties [Yugoslavia and Kosovo] on all important matters he saw fit, including appointing and removing officials and curtailing institutions.”[4] The Rambouillet “accord” would have turned Kosovo into a NATO colony, and gone a long way toward subordinating all of Yugoslavia.

Western decision makers long made it clear that too much of the Yugoslav economy still remained in the not-for-profit public sector, including the Trepca mining complex in Kosovo, described in the *New York Times* as “war's glittering prize ... the most valuable piece of real estate in the Balkans ... worth at least $5 billion” in deposits of coal, lead, zinc, cadmium, gold, and silver.[5] Under the Rambouillet proposals, the Trepca mines were among the federal properties that the Yugoslavs would have to privatize and kiss goodbye.

The Yugoslav delegation at Rambouillet agreed to cede de facto independence to Kosovo, including control over religion, education, health care systems, and local governance. But they sought to negotiate changes that would (a) allow the FRY to retain authority over economic and foreign

policy, and (b) limit any international presence in Kosovo to observation and advice. 'The Serbian negotiating efforts were summarily dismissed and the Serbs were told they had only two choices: sign the agreement as written or face NATO bombing."[6]

FREE MARKET UBER ALLES

US officials at Rambouillet made their determined dedication to the free market perfectly clear. Chapter 4a, Article 1, of the Rambouillet "agreement" states in no uncertain terms: "The economy of Kosovo shall function in accordance with free market principles." There was to be no restriction on the movement of "goods, services, and capital to Kosovo." The citizens of Kosovo and the rest of Serbia were not troubled for their opinions on this. As with every other aspect of the "agreement," matters of trade, investment, and corporate ownership were settled for them by the Western policy makers.

To be certain that war could not be avoided, the US delegation added a remarkable military protocol, which subordinated all of Yugoslavia to an extraterritoriality tantamount to outright colonial domination. NATO forces were to have unrestrained access to all of Yugoslavia. Appendix B of the Rambouillet agreement reads:

> 6.b. NATO [military and civilian] personnel, under all circumstances and at all times, shall be immune from ... jurisdiction in respect of any civil, administrative, criminal, or disciplinary offenses which may be committed by them in the FRY [the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia].
>
> 7. NATO personnel shall be immune from any form of arrest, investigation, or detention by the authorities in the FRY.
>
> 8. NATO personnel shall enjoy, together with their vehicles, vessels, aircraft, and equipment, free and unrestricted passage and unimpeded access throughout the FRY including associated airspace and territorial waters.

NATO was to be granted unfettered use of airports, roads, rails, and ports, and was to be free of any obligation to pay duties, taxes, fees, or other costs. Upon NATO's “simple request,” Yugoslavia was to “grant all telecommunications services, including broadcast services,” needed for NATO's operation, “as determined by NATO.” This would include “the right to use all of the electromagnetic spectrum for this purpose, free of cost.” In other words, NATO could take over all of Yugoslavia's airwaves. NATO would also have the option to improve or otherwise modify for its own use “certain infrastructure in the FRY, such as roads, bridges, tunnels, buildings, and utility systems.”[7]

In effect, not just Kosovo but all of Yugoslavia was to come under NATO's regency. NATO forces would be accountable to no one, able to operate at will throughout the length and breadth of the FRY. It is a measure of the dishonesty of Western leaders and media that they managed to leave this most outrageous portion of the Rambouillet document unpublicized.

The Rambouillet “agreement” was not an agreement at all, not a negotiated settlement but an ultimatum for unconditional surrender, a diktat that spelled death for Yugoslavia and could not be accepted by Belgrade. As John Pilger wrote, “Anyone scrutinizing the Rambouillet document is left in little doubt that the excuses given for the subsequent bombing were fabricated. The peace negotiations were stage managed, and the Serbs were told: surrender and be occupied, or don’t surrender and be destroyed.”[8]

Rambouillet was, in effect, an ambush. Ronald Hatchett sums it up well: It was “a declaration of war disguised as a peace agreement.”[9] George Kenney, a former US State Department, Yugoslavia, desk officer, lends substance to this view: “An unimpeachable press source who regularly travels with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told this [writer] that ... a senior State Department official had bragged that the United States 'deliberately set the bar higher than the Serbs could accept.’ The Serbs needed, according to the official, a little bombing to see reason.”[10] James Jatras, a foreign policy aid to Senate Republicans, reported essentially the same story in a speech in May 1999.[11] There was a deliberate US strategy to push unacceptable demands in order to make Milosevic seem like the

recalcitrant belligerent, thereby creating a pretext for NATO’s aerial massacre.

As US leaders would have us believe, it was the intransigent Serbs, led by the diabolical Milosevic, who refused to negotiate. In fact, as we have seen, it was the US government that disallowed any kind of serious diplomacy. The rest is history. Belgrade refused to sign the Rambouillet ultimatum. Buttressed by the Racak atrocity story of a few weeks earlier, NATO battered Yugoslavia with round-the-clock aerial assaults for eleven weeks, from March 24 to June 10 1999, professedly to deliver the Kosovo Albanians from genocide and introduce the Serbs to the blessings of Western democracy.

Nato’s War Crimes

Unfortunately, it is the powerful who write the laws of the world—and the powerful who ignore these laws when expediency dictates. The attacks launched against Yugoslavia in March-June 1999 were in violation of the following international and national laws:

- The UN Charter clearly guarantees the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The FRY had attacked no United Nations member; therefore, there were no grounds for war against it. Under the UN Charter, collective action can be taken only with Security Council support, which was not forthcoming given the veto power exercised by China and Russia. So the NATO powers simply bypassed the United Nations.
- NATO's own charter says it can take military action only in response to aggression committed against one of its members. Yugoslavia had attacked. no NATO member.
- Article I, Section 8 of the US Constitution requires a declaration of war from the US Congress. Undersecretary of State Thomas Pickering, testifying on behalf of the Clinton administration before the House Committee on International Relations, admitted that Kosovo was part of a sovereign state and bombing a sovereign state was an act of war. When asked whether an act of war requires the approval of Congress,

Pickering demurred, “Not every act of war requires it.” So the Constitution was conveniently circumvented. As Representative Tom Campbell (R-Cal.) complained, “No emergency prevented the president from making his case before Congress. He simply chose not to do so.”[1]

- The War Powers Act requires the president to get permission from Congress should he engage in a limited military “action” for more than sixty days. The bombings continued past sixty days and the White House lifted not a finger to bring the matter before Congress. Nor did the liberal hawks in Congress express the slightest concern about the illegalities of Clinton's war.

The War Powers Resolution states that the president's constitutional power as Commander-in-Chief to introduce US armed forces into hostilities, or into situations where imminent hostilities are clearly indicated, can be executed “only pursuant to (1) a declaration of war, (2) specific statutory authorization, or (3) a national emergency created by attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces.”[2] None of these conditions obtained in March 1999.

It was Congressman Abraham Lincoln, commenting on President Polk's war against Mexico (1846-48), who said, “Allow the President to invade a neighboring nation, whenever he shall deem it necessary to repel an invasion ... and you allow him to make war at pleasure.” This would place “our President where kings have always stood.” The founders of the Constitution, Lincoln continued, having recognized that war was “the most oppressive of all kingly oppressions,” reserved the war-making power for the elected body of representatives, the Congress.[3]

With NATO's attack upon Yugoslavia, we have the first major war declared by a body that has no constituency or geography as would be found in a nation-state. “NATO has no capital, elections, or natural existence. For the first time in history, an institution has declared war on a country.”[4] So command and control of the world rests increasingly with corporations and the organizations that support them, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and NATO.[5] With the assault on Yugoslavia, Clinton and NATO

declared war upon democratic sovereignty and the right of citizens to have any say about policies that are carried out in their name.

Along with international law, US leaders also discarded traditional diplomacy. Traditional diplomacy is a process of negotiating disputes through give and take, proposal and counterproposal, a way of pressing one's interests only so far, arriving eventually at a solution that may leave one side more dissatisfied than the other but not to the point of forcing either party to war.

US diplomacy is something else, as evidenced in its dealings with Vietnam, Nicaragua, Panama, Iraq, and then Yugoslavia. It consists of laying down a set of demands that are treated as nonnegotiable, though called “accords” or “agreements.” The other side’s reluctance to surrender to every condition—in the case of Rambouillet, surrender its very sovereignty—is labeled “stonewalling,” and is publicly represented as an unwillingness to negotiate in good faith. US leaders, we hear, run out of patience as their “offers” are “snubbed” or “spumed.” Ultimatums are issued, then aerial destruction is delivered upon the recalcitrant nation so that it might learn to behave the way Washington wants. Clinton's Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, supposedly the nation's top diplomat, made clear her impatience with normal diplomatic effort. Referring to the period after Rambouillet, just before the NATO air attacks began, she said, “I got increasingly frustrated that we were doing this peacefully. ... We had to take action.”[7]

NATO VS. CANADIAN SOVEREIGNTY

It was not only Yugoslav sovereignty that was violated by NATO's illegal action. Canadian sovereignty was also abused. Canada became involved in a war without any member of the Canadian parliament or the Canadian people being consulted. The ultimate expression of a nation's sovereignty is the right to declare war. NATO abrogated this right. If it is essential that we give up some of our sovereignty as the price we pay for membership in global institutions such as NATO, then it is mandatory that such institutions follow their own rules, respect the rule of law, and operate within the generally accepted framework of the United Nations Charter. This NATO did not do.[6]

Such action violated basic maxims of morality. As the White House saw it, since the stated intention of the aerial attacks was not to kill civilians, then civilian deaths were only regrettable incidentals, not moral liabilities. In other words, only the professed intent of an action counted, not its ineluctable and predictable effects.

Under the laws of civil society, that would not be the case. One can incur criminal liability for pursuing an action that inevitably leads to serious injury of others even if one professes no such intent. Suppose a man drives a car into a crowd of people, killing or injuring some. He then says he had no intention of hurting people but was just in a hurry. Since the deaths were unintended, they were accidental, he argues; therefore he pleads innocent. But according to the law, his action is anything but free of criminal liability. Even if he had no intention of hurting pedestrians, and had a compelling necessity such as getting to work on time, he would still face charges for recklessly driving his vehicle into a crowd of pedestrians and inflicting unavoidable injury upon them. The predictably ineluctable nature of the incident makes it something more than an innocent accident.

As applied to the nation-state, such morality is inverted. It is understood that bombing various populated areas will lead to the death of innocent civilians. Now suddenly the inevitable nature of the deaths and injuries

becomes the very thing that makes them morally permissible. Since civilian casualties by bombings are unintended and unavoidable, then we are just going to have to learn to accept them as one of those regrettable things about war. So don't blame the people who order the bombing.

But there is a real question as to how unintended the killing of civilians has been. As George Kenney, a former state department official in the Bush Administration, put it: "Dropping cluster bombs on highly populated urban areas doesn't result in accidental fatalities. It is purposeful terror bombing."[8] (The use of cluster bombs is ipso facto a violation of international law and a war crime.) NATO planners actually spelled out beforehand the estimated number of people who would be killed when they bombed a Belgrade office building that housed political parties and television and radio stations: 50 to 100 government and party employees, and 250 civilians. As William Blum notes, here were decision-makers consciously planning to hit a particular target, knowingly killing a substantial number of civilians, then publicly insisting afterward that it was unintended.[9]

Through most of the aerial campaign, NATO spokespersons repeatedly denied that they had targeted civilians. Civilian casualties were written off as unfortunate accidents or ascribed to the Serbs. Thus when Belgrade charged that NATO jets hit a refugee convoy, killing dozens of civilians, NATO supreme commander General Wesley Clark blamed Yugoslav forces for the attack. He eventually retracted his version, and NATO belatedly took responsibility for the "accident."[10]

Sometimes, the NATO attackers defended their atrocities by claiming that a civilian target was really a military one, as when NATO mouthpiece Jamie Shea unblushingly announced that the bombing of Surdulica hospital was deliberate because the hospital was really a military barracks. This was a blatant fabrication. Journalists who visited Surdulica immediately after the bombing discovered a badly damaged sanitarium, with the pitiful remains of civilian dead.[11]

During the war, a reporter asked Jamie Shea why, if NATO leaders believe international law is so important, were they arguing that the

International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Tribunal had no jurisdiction over what NATO was doing to the people of Yugoslavia? Shea responded that both those bodies were established primarily by the NATO countries. “NATO countries are those that have provided the finance to set up the tribunal; we are among the major financiers.” Shea noted that the charges brought against NATO by Yugoslavia were under the genocide convention. “That convention does not apply to NATO countries. As to whom it does apply, I think we know the answer there.”[12] Shea's position was clear: if NATO killed the innocent, it was beyond the jurisdiction of international tribunals and courts; if Serbia killed the innocent, it was a war crime.

The spoon-fed press briefings, sophistic arguments, and endless lies could not quite cover up the increasingly wanton nature of NATO's aerial attacks upon hospitals, schools, a train filled with passengers, two buses, a village bridge on market day, churches, rural dwellings, and apartment houses. Human Rights Watch—an organization that rarely strays from the US interventionist global paradigm—issued a report that “found no evidence of war crimes,” by NATO, and placed the number of civilians killed by the air attacks at “over five hundred,” putting it close to NATO's own estimate of a few hundred. (Belgrade said 500 military and 2,000 civilians were killed, and 6,000 wounded.) Yet even Human Rights Watch ventured that NATO may have caused “excessive” civilian casualties and breached the Geneva Convention by using cluster bombs, attacking targets of questionable military legitimacy, and not taking adequate measures to warn civilians of strikes or identify the presence of civilians when attacking.[13]

That NATO attacks upon civilian targets were not usually the result of war “errors” was confirmed by Captain Martin de la Hoz, who participated in bombing missions, flying an F-18. Several times his Spanish colonel lodged protests with NATO chiefs regarding their selection of nonmilitary targets, only to be rudely rebuffed. “Once there was a coded order from the North American military that we should drop antipersonnel bombs over the localities of Pristina and Nis,” Captain de la Hoz commented. “The colonel refused it altogether and, a couple of days later, [his] transfer order came. ... All the missions that we flew, all and each one, were planned by US high

military authorities. Even more, they were all planned in detail, including attacking planes, targets and type of ammunition that we have to throw."

He concluded: "They are destroying the country, bombing it with novel weapons, toxic nerve gases, surface mines dropped with parachute, bombs containing uranium, black napalm, sterilization chemicals, sprayings to poison the crops, and weapons of which even we still do not know anything. The North Americans are committing there one of the biggest barbarities that can be committed against humanity."[14]

NATO'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ART OF KILLING

After the bombings stopped, various police stations around Belgrade displayed dozens of photos of officers killed while performing rescue operations or other duties during the aerial attacks. Casualties among rescue workers were high. NATO had devised the devilish technique of bombing a site, then waiting fifteen minutes—just time enough for rescue teams to arrive and get working—to hit the target a second time, killing many of the would-be rescuers, and making it extremely dangerous for teams to dig for survivors. This method of delayed follow-up precision missile attack on a civilian target was one of NATO's innovative war crimes.[15]

With words that might cause us to question his humanity, the NATO commander General Wesley Clark boasted that the aim of the air war was to "demolish, destroy, devastate, degrade, and ultimately eliminate the essential infrastructure" of Yugoslavia. No doubt atrocities were committed by all sides including the Serbs, but where is the sense of proportionality? Serbian paramilitary killings in Kosovo (many of which occurred after the aerial war began) are no justification for bombing fifteen cities in round-the-clock raids for over two months, spewing hundreds of thousands of tons of highly toxic and carcinogenic chemicals into the water, air, and soil, poisoning agricultural fields and rivers, maiming and killing thousands,

exposing millions to depleted uranium, and obliterating the productive capital of an entire nation. Such a massive aggression amounts to a vastly greater war crime than anything that has been charged against Milosevic.

It may come as a surprise—or an irrelevancy—to some, but unrestricted aerial attacks of the kind NATO rained down upon Yugoslavia are prohibited under international law. Destroying a country's infrastructure, its waterworks, power plants, bridges, factories, hospitals, schools, churches, agriculture, civilian transportation, and communications system—not to mention the attendant loss of life and injury to civilians—is nothing less than a horrendous war crime.[16] Yet, the realities of power being what they are, major war criminals such as Clinton, Blair, and their associates go unchallenged.

In June 1999 President Clinton delivered a thirteen-minute address on national television, into which he managed to pack a record number of deceptions justifying the US-NATO attack on Yugoslavia:

Fiction: Clinton claimed that "the demands of an outraged and united international community have been met."

Fact: The international community, as represented by the 154-member United Nations, was bypassed, and war was waged by the US-dominated NATO. If anything, argues Martin McLaughlin, much of the international community was "outraged by the savagery of the NATO bombing of a sovereign country."[17]

Fiction: Clinton claimed that he waged war "to enable the Kosovar people, the victims of some of the most vicious atrocities in Europe since the Second World War, to return to their homes with safety and self-government."

Fact: The great majority of Kosovo Albanians did not leave their homes until the bombing started, nor had they been subjected to widespread atrocities, certainly not prior to the NATO bombings.

Fiction: Clinton claimed that the NATO victory brought new hope that the US and the world would always support peoples who are subjected to

ethnic or religious oppression.

Fact: The US government actively supports dozens of governments around the world that oppress ethnic and religious minorities including Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Guatemala, and Mexico, as well as several NATO allies, most notoriously Turkey, whose mass killings and expulsions of Kurds far outstrip anything Milosevic has been accused of doing.

Fiction: Clinton praised US pilots for "risking their lives to attack their targets" while avoiding civilian casualties, even though they were "fired upon from populated areas."

Fact: There were no US combat casualties, and US pilots were rarely in danger as they dropped thousands of tons of bombs on virtually defenseless civilian populations.[18]

Fiction: Clinton maintained that "when our diplomatic efforts to avert this horror were rebuffed, and the violence mounted, we and our allies chose to act."

Fact: There was no diplomatic effort at Rambouillet, only an ultimatum that provided a pretext for military attack. The Serbs were told to sign the Rambouillet agreement and accept unrestricted NATO occupation of Yugoslavia—or be bombed.

Fiction: Clinton boasted how nineteen democracies had together faced "the stiffest military challenge in NATO's 50-year history."

Fact: Yugoslavia, a country of 11 million people with a small army and a substandard air force, posed no serious military challenge to an alliance that controls half the world's GDP and over half the world's military spending.[19] The "stiffest military challenge" in NATO's history was actually a sadistic, one-sided, gang-battering of a small country by the most powerful military forces in the world.

Clinton also asserted that the NATO action had averted "the wider war this conflict may well have sparked," that there was a perfectly peaceful way that Belgrade could have kept Kosovo but chose not to do so, and that

the demonic “Mr. Milosevic was determined to eliminate Kosovar Albanians from Kosovo, dead or alive.” Luckily though, because of “our resolve” the new century begins not with helpless indignation but with a new affirmation of “human dignity and human rights.” Again, it bears repeating; the Albanian exodus from Kosovo began after the NATO bombings that trampled on human dignity and human rights. And at Rambouillet, it was the US that rejected “a perfectly peaceful” solution to the Kosovo conflict.

In April 1999, as the NATO bombs and missiles rained down upon Yugoslavia, teams of international law professors from Canada, the United Kingdom, Greece, and the American Association of Jurists filed war crimes charges against NATO with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. In November, two Canadian lawyers, David Jacobs and law professor Michael Mandel delivered three thick volumes of evidence to ICTY prosecutor Carla Del Ponte in The Hague, substantiating their charges that sixty-seven NATO leaders (including Bill Clinton, Madeleine Albright, Tony Blair, and Jean Chretien) were guilty of causing the deaths and maiming of thousands of civilians and billions of dollars of property damage. The lawyers told Judge Del Ponte that her court's continued failure to act was a violation of her duties under the law. They noted that, while having rushed to indict Yugoslav President Milosevic during the illegal NATO bombardment, the tribunal still had made no move against the NATO leaders, raising serious questions about its impartiality.[20]

Two months later, Del Ponte made clear that a formal investigation into NATO's war actions was unlikely. Both the White House and the Pentagon opposed any international jurisdiction over US military forces, regardless of what the ICTY's mandate might be.[21] The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia was set up by the United Nations Security Council in 1993 at the bidding of Madeline Albright and the US government. It depends on NATO countries for its financial support, with the United States as the major provider, and it looks to NATO to track down and arrest the suspects it puts on trial. Although located in The Hague, this tribunal has no connection to the World Court and no precedent in international law or the UN Charter. It hardly qualifies as any kind of independent judiciary body.[22]

The one-sided destruction perpetrated by US-directed NATO forces against Yugoslavia—laughably described as a “war”—was part of the larger US policy of global military interventionism. Over the past half century, the US national security state has been involved in numerous bloody wars, directly or by proxy, in Afghanistan, Angola, Colombia, Cambodia, East Timor, El Salvador, Guatemala, Laos, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Vietnam, and Western Sahara. Then there are the coups and destabilization campaigns: Chile, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Iran, Iraq, and elsewhere. In addition, US leaders have supported brutally repressive regimes throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

In just the last two decades or so, US military activity has been cause for consternation and outrage. A country reputedly dedicated to peace has been engaged almost continuously in military attacks against other nations, including no fewer than seven major invasions or bombing campaigns (in Grenada, Panama, Libya, Iraq [1990-91 and 1999], Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo); ongoing military occupations (in Haiti, Bosnia, Macedonia, and Kosovo); and proxy wars and interventions in scores of other countries, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths - all testimony to the increasingly unrestrained militarism behind US imperialism.

The Genocide Hype Continues

Despite their high-sounding proclamations, US and other Western leaders treated Yugoslavia exactly the way they have treated many other peoples all over the world. Nevertheless, “Green” and “left” intellectuals and various liberals convinced themselves that this time their leaders were indeed acting as champions against genocide. Since NATO’s war against Yugoslavia was indisputably illegal, it had to be justified on higher humanitarian grounds: it was a moral crusade to stop that greatest of all evils, Milosevic, and the genocidal Serbs.[1]

The Yugoslav army was invariably described in the Western media as “Serbian.” By 1992, its troops were indeed predominantly Serbian, but the army still contained numerous other nationalities, including ethnic Hungarians, Turks, Egyptians, Roma, Slovaks, Gorani, Jews, and even

draftees drawn from the Croat and Albanian populations living in Serbia and Montenegro.

Once the NATO bombings began, this Yugoslav army, along with police and paramilitaries from the Republic of Serbia, embarked on a policy of forced evacuation of Albanians from areas that were KLA strongholds, or suspected of being such. If the Serbs were intent upon a genocidal extermination of the Kosovo Albanian population, why were they sending them packing? If the reports can be believed, along with the expulsions, there was much plundering and instances of summary execution of KLA suspects by Serb paramilitary forces. But the scale of such criminal incidents is indicative of a limited counterinsurgency not an orchestrated mass genocide.

In addition, tens of thousands of Albanians fled Kosovo because of the NATO bombings themselves, or because they wanted to get away from the sustained ground fighting between Yugoslav forces and the KLA, or they were just afraid and hungry. Refugees from the war zone were all portrayed in the media as “deportees.” But as one Albanian woman crossing into Macedonia put it when asked by a news crew if she had been forced out by Serb police: “There were no Serbs. We were frightened of the bombs.”[2]

During the bombings, an estimated 70,000 to 100,000 Serbian residents of Kosovo also took flight, as did thousands of Roma and other non-Albanian ethnic groups.[3] Were these people ethnically cleansing themselves? Or were they not fleeing the bombing and the ground war? In the Roma quarter of a Kosovo refugee camp in Macedonia, “a half-dozen refugees said they had fled because of the air strikes.” Others seemed unable to speak freely, being monitored by a burly Albanian man who kept interjecting that the refugees “had fled Kosovo because of Serbs and not because of NATO bombing.”[4]

The head of the UN forces deployed in the former Yugoslavia, 1992-93, Lieutenant-General Satish Nambiar of India, commented: “I do not believe the Belgrade government had prior intention of driving out all Albanians from Kosovo. It may have decided to implement [mass deportation] only if NATO bombed, or those expulsions could be spontaneous acts of revenge

and retaliation by Serb forces in the field because of the bombing." The Yugoslav government had indicated its willingness to abide by the cease-fire and grant greater autonomy to the Albanians, Nambiar notes, "but they insisted that the status of Kosovo as part of Serbia was not negotiable, and they would not agree to stationing NATO forces on the soil of Yugoslavia. This is precisely what India would have done under the same circumstances."[5]

Apologists for the NATO bombing of Kosovo cite Milosevic's fiendish plan to expel the Albanian population as justification for the bombing. The plan presumably came first. But in April 2000, in an interview with the Sunday Times of London, retired German Brigadier General Heinz Loquai stated there was no such plan, just a vague report from Bulgarian intelligence. Even the Bulgarian report, Loquai said, concluded that the Yugoslav goal was to rout the KLA not expel the entire population.[6]

If the Milosevic government had been harboring plans to forcefully evacuate one million Albanians from Kosovo all along, why did no evidence of this surface beforehand or afterward? Before March 24 (the day the NATO aerial assaults began), no opposition Yugoslav political leader, or Western leader, or humanitarian organization warned the world that a mass campaign of forced deportation was in the offing. The OSCE, with over 1,300 verifiers who regularly monitored Yugoslav communications, alerted no one. Nobody in NATO produced intelligence data indicating a systematic province-wide expulsion of refugees by Yugoslav forces.

EVERYONE FELT LIKE AN ENEMY

Vlada, a unit commander in the Yugoslav army, reveals his mixed feelings about the Serb paramilitaries who preceded his regular troops into various Kosovo towns, driving out the inhabitants while engaging in firefights with entrenched KLA combatants. The paramilitaries sometimes took innocent lives, Vlada acknowledges, but it was hard to know who was innocent and who was setting up an ambush. The paramilitaries may have saved his life, he thinks. "It was ugly but it happened; everyone you saw felt like an enemy.

It's the worst kind of war." The KLA were "not the only ones guilty for this war, but they are among them." Yugoslav soldiers looted and burned many houses, "especially the big, rich ones," equipped with televisions, video recorders, refrigerators, and tractors. Vlada and his comrades were infuriated when they found large well-furnished houses with Jacuzzis that contained Albanian flags, the KLA insignia, or uniforms or pictures of men in KLA uniforms with arms. What more did the Albanian home owners want? Vlada would ask himself.[7]

But once the bombing began and the refugee flow started, the Clinton administration and NATO representatives suddenly claimed to have known all along that there had been a plot to ethnically cleanse the province. They would have had us believe that their bombing was a prescient punishment for a crime not yet committed. We bombed them because they were planning to force people out of Kosovo. Proof? People fled Kosovo once the bombing started. The bombing, which was a major cause of the refugee problem was now seen as the solution, an anticipatory response by precognitive policy makers. The refugee tide created in large part by the massive aerial attacks of March-June 1999 was also treated as *post hoc* justification for such attacks, a way of putting pressure on Milosevic to allow "the safe return of ethnic Albanian refugees."[8] That remains the official line to this day.

In striking contrast to its many public assertions, the German Foreign Office privately denied there was any evidence that genocide or ethnic cleansing was a component of Yugoslav policy. In its reports to administrative courts handling ethnic Albanian immigration requests, the Foreign Office wrote:

> Even in Kosovo, an explicit political persecution linked to Albanian ethnicity is not verifiable. ... The actions of the [Yugoslav] security forces [were] not directed against the Kosovo-Albanians as an ethnically defined group, but against the military opponent and its actual or alleged supporters. ... There is no sufficient actual proof of a secret program, or an

> unspoken consensus on the Serbian side, to liquidate the Albanian people, to drive it out or otherwise to persecute it in the extreme manner presently described.[9]

According to highly placed officials in the German government, the reasons for the flight from Kosovo were more or less equally distributed as follows:

- Fear of getting killed by NATO's bombings, and a desire to escape the general devastation and difficult conditions caused by the aerial assault, such as the lack of clean water in nearly all urban areas.
- Fear of getting caught in the crossfire between the KLA and the Yugoslav military.
- Attacks by Yugoslav soldiers and Serbian police and paramilitary, often triggered by KLA attacks carried out under cover of ethnic Albanian civilians.
- Spreading of panic and horror stories in the broadcasts of dozens of small KLA, NATO or Albanian shortwave radio stations, alongside the propaganda broadcasts of the KLA from Albania over Radio Tirana.
- Pillaging bands of Albanian mafia and the KLA, who extorted money, looted houses for anything of value, then burned the houses to create a political effect.
- KLA irregular troops, who declared a “general mobilization,” forcing every available man into their military service. Those objecting were subjected to grave physical abuse and released only upon paying a ransom.
- KLA announcements that NATO was about to carry out a massive ground attack.[10]

The *New York Times* reported that “a major purpose of the NATO effort is to end the Serb atrocities that drove more than one million Albanians from their homes.”[11] That number has never been verified. The figures reported at various refugee camps numbered in the thousands or tens of thousands at most. The numbers who were resettled in several other countries were even smaller. Where could these million-plus refugees have gone? And how did most of them get back into Kosovo within a matter of days after the bombing? And what of the hundreds of thousands who never left and were there to greet the NATO forces as they rolled in? The BBC reported that a

surprisingly high percentage of Albanians stayed in the Kosovo capital of Pristina during the bombings, trying to survive together in peace and friendship with Serbian residents.[12]

Whatever the size of the refugee tide, the truth is it did not begin until after the bombing commenced. Nevertheless, we were asked to believe that the exodus was caused not by the ground war against the KLA and not by the massive NATO air attacks but exclusively by a sudden rise in Serbian repression.

Many news photos inadvertently revealed that the Kosovo Albanians, who were leaving in substantial numbers, were usually well-clothed and in good health, some riding their tractors, trucks, or cars, many of them young men of recruitment age. During a fact-finding trip to the Balkans, Congressman James Inhofe (R-Okla.) remarked: “I was shocked to find out, as perhaps you were, that they are very well off, considering they are refugees. [The children] are all wearing Nikes and were very well dressed.”[13]

Mass-rape stories, reminiscent of the Bosnian war, were resuscitated. A headline in the San Francisco Examiner tells us “SERB TACTIC IS ORGANIZED RAPE, KOSOVO REFUGEES SAY.” Only at the bottom of the story, in the nineteenth paragraph, do we read that reports gathered by the Kosovo mission of OSCE found no such organized rape policy. The actual number of rapes were in the dozens “and not many dozens,” according to the OSCE representative.[15]

SOMETHING LOST IN THE TRANSLATION

As an Albanian woman living in Italy wrote, "I completely agree with the articles in *Liberazione* . . . on the bad information during the Yugoslavia war. . . . I have denounced the manipulation of information and, particularly, the role of the translators, who often deform what the interviewed persons say. As I know the [Albanian] language, I can understand the questions and the replies, and can compare them to the translations. The number of victims is often exaggerated. For instance, in a radio broadcast, a Kosovo Albanian mentions four dead, and the interpreter multiplies that to forty! In another broadcast, which RAI 3 TV also showed, a TV crew, accompanied by UCK [KLA] soldiers talks to Albanian women of Kosovo. Before the interview, they [said they were warned] by one of the soldiers 'not to talk too much'; however, that is not translated. Another example: they ask an Albanian woman: "Do you approve of the NATO bombings?" The interpreter translates, while whispering: "Say yes, say yes."[14]

NATO's spokesperson and premier fabricator, Jamie Shea, claimed that "100,000 babies" had been "born in refugee camps to Albanian women" in just two months. At that time, the total number of women in the camps was estimated at 200,000, which meant there was a phenomenal 50 per cent birthrate within a time frame of just sixty days or so.[16] Most of these alleged births were the result of Serbian mass rapes, it was understood. But the rapes would have had to occur just at the time of month when all 100,000 women were fertile, and nine months before—antedating the time when Yugoslav security forces launched their counterinsurgency into Albanian areas. Even NATO no longer defends that story.

In May 1999 the US State Department issued a report described as the "most comprehensive record to date on atrocities in Kosovo." It said that surveillance photographs had identified "seven possible sites of mass graves," and spoke of "systematic mass rapes apparently carried out in the

cities of Djakovica and Pec." Apparently? Almost in its entirety, the report was based on unconfirmed refugee accounts that had already been bandied about by the media or human rights groups. There was no suggestion that US intelligence agencies had verified most or even any of these stories. The words "reportedly" and "allegedly" appear throughout the document.[17]

An episode of ABC Nightline in September 1999 made dramatic and repeated references to the "mass atrocities in Kosovo" perpetrated by the Serbs, while offering no specifics save one. It came when Ted Koppel asked angry Albanian refugees what they had witnessed. They pointed to an old man in their group who wore a wool hat. The Serbs had thrown the man's hat to the ground and stepped on it, "because the Serbs knew that his hat was the most important thing to him," they told Koppel, who registered an appropriately horrified expression at this war crime.

British journalist Audrey Gillan interviewed Kosovo refugees about atrocities and found an impressive lack of evidence. One woman caught Gillan glancing at the watch on her wrist, while her husband was claiming that all the women had been robbed of their jewelry and other possessions. A spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees talked of mass rapes and what sounded like hundreds of killings in three villages. When Gillan pressed him for more precise information, he reduced it to five or six teenage rape victims, then admitted that he had not spoken to any witnesses and had no way of verifying any reports of rape.[18]

Gillan noted that some refugees had seen killings and other atrocities, but there was little to suggest that they had seen it on the scale that was being publicized. Officials told her of refugees who talked of sixty or more being killed in one village and fifty in another, but Gillan "could not find a single eyewitness who actually saw these things happen." It was always in some other village that the mass atrocities seem to have occurred. Yet Western journalists filed daily reports of "hundreds" of rapes and murders. Sometimes they noted in passing that these had yet to be substantiated, but then why did they hasten to publicize such stories?

The rhetoric employed to frame the plight of the refugees seemed vastly inflated compared to the real enough hardships and losses they sustained.

NPR correspondent Silvia Poggioli was asked to describe what she witnessed when accompanying an Albanian woman back to her house in a Kosovo village. “It was an indescribable nightmare,” she said. “There was furniture lying around that this woman had never seen before. Precious things were broken, things that mean so much to a person, memories of one’s lifetime.”[20] Surely one can sympathize with the woman’s losses, but do strange furniture and broken mementos amount to an “indescribable nightmare”? Moreover do such instances of mistreatment justify a massive aerial war against a defenseless civilian population?

FABRICATING ANOTHER ATROCITY

CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] correspondent Nancy Durham made a name for herself by venturing deep into Kosovo as a one-woman news team and bringing back moving stories about both the dead and the living. Now it turns out that one of her most touching reports—about an eighteen-year-old girl named Rajmonda who vowed to avenge her sister’s death at Serb hands—is based on a lie. With the cameras rolling, Rajmonda vowed to join the KLA in order to avenge the death of her six-year-old sister at Serb hands. But, as Durham discovered when she made a postwar visit to the girl’s home, the sister was alive and well.[19]

On May 6 1999, President Clinton visited an Albanian refugee camp in Germany. As reported by the Associated Press, he “marveled at how much the refugees resembled Americans, especially one woman he spotted wearing a T-shirt from the 1996 summer Olympics in Atlanta.” The president took time to share “their horrific stories.” A woman told of being “alone when armed Serbian police forced her from her home.” That was her entire story as reported—an injustice, but not exactly an atrocity as normally understood. Another said that the refugees “have seen massacres” (but no particulars were provided). A man told of fleeing to the railroad station to get a train out of Kosovo: “We were frightened by the police,” he said (not shot, beaten, or tortured, but frightened). “On the first night,” he

went on, “five women delivered babies at the train station and were not allowed to go to hospitals.” If only one woman was mistreated in this manner, it would be reprehensible enough. But here we are concerned also with the credibility of such reports. That there were five pregnant women in the relatively small group waiting for the train is not beyond probability. That they all gave birth on the very same night denotes a synchronization of fertility that might give one pause. Describing the Serb police, one man said, “They tried to take away all our money. They tried to kill my brother.” Again, if this is an account of a horrific atrocity, the wording is puzzling. They “tried” to steal and kill but apparently did not.

A *New York Times* account of Clinton's visit to the camp says he encouraged the refugees to tell of the “literally almost unbelievable” things that had happened to them. “The stories came in a flood,” notes the Times. One woman said “I left my brother in the basement and he had no food.” This is a serious misfortune but not exactly an unbelievable horror story. Another woman bribed the Serb police to get her father out. That was her entire account as reported. A young man said, “I’m young but my life is broken from what I've seen [in a Macedonian refugee camp]. The first day I arrived, I heard that twenty-four children, infants, had died of starvation.” What he had seen has broken his life, he says, but he does not tell us what he saw, only what he heard. Nor was any explanation forthcoming as to why friendly camp authorities in Macedonia would let so many children starve, nor why this should be considered a Serb atrocity. Another woman told of her suffering: Serb police demanded five thousand German marks from her. She offered them her golden chain necklace, which they refused, being interested only in cash. That was her entire story as reported.[21]

In sum, the refugees that Clinton spoke to certainly had endured the terrible experience of being uprooted from their homes and sent off with few possessions, in some cases separated from loved ones. But both the AP and Times stories (and Clinton himself) referred to horrific experiences that involved rape, torture, and massacre. Yet when getting down to specifics, the supporting testimony was oddly thin or nonexistent in both reports. No matter. Through a process of constant repetition, the generalities become self-confirming, making specific evidence superfluous. The story is believed because it coincides with so many others that came earlier. Leaders

and media find authentication for the images they propagate in the images they have already propagated.

NATO BOMBS ALSO KILLED ALBANIANS

After the NATO bombing stopped, I went with [temporary UN Special Representative for Kosovo] Sergio de Mello to visit Kosovo. The trip lasted five days. We visited almost every village and city in Kosovo, and we saw what damage resulted from NATO bombing, and what damage resulted from gangs. I want to point out that Mr. Sergio de Mello seemed disinterested in damage from NATO bombing in Kosovo. Most of those killed due to NATO bombing were Albanians. In just one strike from NATO in the village of Korisa, they killed 105 people. Mr. de Mello wasn't interested. ... Albanians got hurt from all sides, but mainly from NATO bombing. More than 300 Albanians were killed by NATO bombings.[22]

Where Are All The Bodies Buried?

On March 18 1999, a week before the aerial attacks on Yugoslavia commenced, David Scheffer, a State Department ambassador at large for war crime issues, announced that "we have upwards of about 100,000 [ethnic Albanian] men that we cannot account for" in Kosovo. A month later, the state department announced that up to 500,000 Kosovo Albanians were missing and feared dead. In mid-May, US Secretary of Defense William Cohen, a former Republican senator serving in President Clinton's Democratic administration, stated that 100,000 military-aged men had vanished and might have been killed by the Serbs. Not long after—as public support for the war began to wane—Ambassador Scheffer escalated the 100,000 figure to "as many as 225,000 ethnic Albanian men aged between fourteen and fifty-nine" who remained unaccounted. He considered this one

of the very greatest genocidal crimes against a civilian population. Indeed it was, if it happened.[1]

As the war dragged on and NATO officials saw press attention drifting toward the contrary story—namely that the bombing was killing civilians—"NATO stepped up its claims about Serb 'killing fields,'" notes the *Wall Street Journal*.[2] Widely varying but horrendous figures from official sources went largely unchallenged by the media. Support for the bombings remained firm among Clinton supporters in Congress (including the one professed "socialist," Bernard Sanders [Ind.-Vt.]), and among self-described humanitarian groups such as Human Rights Watch, Doctors Without Borders, and Concern Worldwide, along with "peace" groups, and various NGOs—many of whom seem to have convinced themselves that NATO was defending Kosovo from a holocaust.

Toward the close of the air campaign, British Foreign Office Minister Geoff Hoon said that "in more than 100 massacres" some 10,000 ethnic Albanians had been killed[3]—a figure substantially reduced from the 100,000 to 500,000 bandied about by US officials. A day or two after the bombings stopped, the Associated Press and other news agencies, echoing Hoon, reported that the Serbs had massacred 10,000 Albanians.[4] No explanation was given as to how this figure was arrived at, given that not a single war site had yet been investigated and NATO forces were just beginning to roll into Kosovo.

On August 2, another pronouncement, this time from the ubiquitous Bernard Kouchner, the United Nations' chief administrator in Kosovo (and head of Doctors Without Borders and friend of KLA leaders), who claimed that 11,000 bodies had been found in common graves throughout the province. He cited as his source the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Republic of Yugoslavia. But the ICTY denied providing any such information to Kouchner or anyone else. To this day, he has not explained how he came up with his estimate and no one has pressed him on the matter.[5]

The Kosovo-based Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms, staffed in part by KLA officials, first promulgated the figure of

10,000 missing, purportedly based on interviews with refugees. The US State Department and Western media parroted the council's estimate. But the number had to be taken on faith because the council refused to share its list of missing persons.[6]

Humanitarian organizations, KLA leaders, NATO and State Department officials, and the news media fed off each other's stories. Through a process of unconfirmed assertion and tireless repetition, evidence became irrelevant. Unsubstantiated references to mass graves, each purportedly filled with hundreds or even thousands of Albanian victims, were daily publicized as established facts. From June through August 1999, the *New York Times* alone ran eighty articles, nearly one a day, that made some reference to mass graves in Kosovo. Yet when it came down to hard evidence, the graves seemed to disappear, as the FBI soon discovered.

In mid-June, the FBI sent a team to investigate two of the sites listed in the war-crimes indictment against Slobodan Milosevic, one said to contain six victims and the other twenty. The team lugged 107,000 pounds of equipment into Kosovo to handle what was called the “largest crime scene in the FBrs forensic history.” But some weeks later, the FBI team returned home, maintaining an odd silence about its investigation.[7] Months later it reported having found not thousands but two hundred bodies at thirty sites.[8]

Investigators from other NATO countries had similar experiences. “French investigators were frustrated at Izbica,” reported the *New York Times*, “when a widely publicized mass grave in which they expected to find about 150 bodies turned out to be empty.” It must have been “dug up with a backhoe and the bodies spirited off, investigators said, between the indictment and the arrival of NATO troops.”[9] A Spanish forensic team was told to prepare for at least 2,000 autopsies, but found only 187 bodies, usually buried in individual graves, and showing no signs of massacre or torture, contrary to the stories circulated by humanitarian groups and local residents. Most seemed to have been killed by mortar shells and firearms. One Spanish forensic expert, Emilio Perez Puhola, said that his team did not find any mass graves. He dismissed the widely publicized references about mass sites as being part of the “machinery of war propaganda.”[10]

According to the London *Sunday Times*, a private research team, Stratfor, basing their analysis on reports from forensic teams involved in the exhumation of bodies, determined that the final total of those killed in Kosovo came to "hundreds not thousands," nor could it be assumed that all or even most of these deaths represented atrocities.[11] This resembles the Srebrenica story in which the Serbs were charged with 7,500 killings, while relatively few corpses were exhumed.

Experts in surveillance photography and wartime propaganda charged NATO with running a "propaganda campaign" that lacked any supporting evidence. State Department reports of mass graves and of 100,000 to 500,000 missing Albanian men "are just ludicrous," according to these independent critics.[12] State Department spokesperson James Rubin admitted that the atrocity accounts he provided to reporters were fed to him by KLA commander Hashim Thaci and were "not necessarily facts." One spurious tale marketed by Rubin described the detention of 100,000 ethnic Albanians in a sports stadium in Pristina, the provincial capital of Kosovo. But when an Agence France-Presse reporter hastened to the site to confirm the story, he "found the stadium to be deserted and showing no signs of recent occupation."[14]

CORPSES MADE TO ORDER

In June 1999, Kathy Sheridan of the *Irish Times* drove up the road to Vucitrn, a little town in Kosovo still held by Serbian security forces. She saw one body lying in the street and many Serbian interior ministry policemen. On the way back to Pristina, she told a BBC radio reporter that she had seen a corpse in Vucitrn and that the place was "littered" with Serbian police. Within minutes, he went on the air with a report that an "Irish reporter" had seen the town "littered with corpses."[13]

The *Washington Post* reported that 350 ethnic Albanians "might be buried in mass graves" around a mountain village in western Kosovo. Might be? Such speculations were based on sources that NATO officials

refused to identify. Getting down to specifics, the article mentions “four decomposing bodies” discovered near a large ash heap, with no details as to who they could be or how they died.[15]

By late August 1999, the frantic hunt for dead bodies continued to disappoint NATO officials and their media minions. The Los Angeles Times tried to salvage the genocide theme with a story about how the wells of Kosovo might be “mass graves in their own right.” The Times claimed that “many corpses have been dumped into wells in Kosovo ... Serbian forces apparently stuffed ... many bodies of ethnic Albanians into wells during their campaign of terror.”[16] Apparently? When the story got down to specifics, it dwelled on only one well in one village—in which the body of a thirty-nine-year-old male was found, along with three dead cows and a dog. Neither his nationality nor cause of death was given. “No other human remains were discovered,” the Times lamely concluded.

An earlier *New York Times* story told of French investigators who pulled the decomposed bodies of eight women from wells in the destroyed village of Cirez, acting on reports from local residents. Yet to be investigated were unconfirmed reports, from forty-four villages in the district around Decani, of thirty-nine dead bodies in wells.[17] As far as I know, there have been no further stories about bodies in wells, which would suggest that no more bodies were actually found in wells.

At one reported grave site after another, bodies failed to materialize in any substantial numbers—or any numbers at all. In July 1999, a mass grave in Ljubenic, near Pec—an area of extensive fighting—believed to be holding some 350 corpses, produced only seven after the exhumation. In Izbica, refugees reported that 150 ethnic Albanians were executed in March. But their bodies were nowhere to be found. In Kraljan, 82 men were supposedly killed, but investigators found not a single cadaver. In Djakovica, town officials claimed that one hundred ethnic Albanians had been murdered, but there were no bodies because the Serbs had returned in the middle of the night, dug them up and carted them all away, the officials claimed. In Pusto Selo, villagers claimed that precisely 106 men were captured and killed by Serbs at the end of March, but again no remains were discovered. Villagers once more suggested that Serbian forces must have

come back and removed them.[18] Again, we would have to ask, how did the Serbs accomplish these mass-grave-disappearing acts? Where were the mass grave sites that had been emptied of bodies? Even if emptied they would have evidence of diggings and traces of their former contents (a shoe, hair, blood stains, a stray article of clothing). Where were the new sites, presumably chock full of bodies? And why were the new ones so impossible to detect? Questions of this sort were never posed.

The worst allegation of mass atrocities, a war crime ascribed to Yugoslavian president Slobodan Milosevic, was said to have occurred at the Trepca mine. As reported by US and NATO officials, the Serbs threw a thousand or more bodies down the shafts or disposed of them in the mine's vats of hydrochloric acid. In October 1999, the ICTY released the findings of Western forensic teams investigating Trepca: not a single body was found in the mine shafts, nor was there any evidence that the vats had ever been used in an attempt to dissolve human remains.[19] Additional stories about a Nazi-like body disposal facility in a furnace “on the other side of the mountain” from the mine motivated a forensic team to analyze ashes in the furnace. “They found no teeth or other signs of burnt bodies.”[21] The International Criminal Tribunal checked the largest reported grave sites first, and found most to contain no more than five bodies, “suggesting intimate killings rather than mass murder.”[22] By the end of the year, the media hype about mass graves had noticeably fizzled. The designated mass grave sites, considered the most notorious, offered up a few hundred bodies altogether, not the thousands or tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands previously trumpeted, and with no evidence of torture or mass execution. In many cases, there was no certain evidence regarding the nationality of victims—and no report on cause of death.[23] All this did not prevent the Associated Press from reiterating the charge, as late as November 30 1999, that “10,000 people were killed in Kosovo.”

MASS-PRODUCED MASS GRAVE STORIES

You would expect the stories [about mass graves] to be horrifying. What is surprising is that they are so repetitious-using the same phrases—that reading them is exhausting. ... Evidence, if

any, is anecdotal; sources are vague. The discovery or even the rumor of a grave is cited (often by some authority figure) as proof of Serbian atrocities. These atrocities are then discussed in great, though entirely speculative, detail.

Arguments are circular. Dead bodies are found, The assumptions are made that they are Albanians; they are civilians; they were killed by Serbs; the Serbs were soldiers or policemen. These speculations, once uttered, become part of the record, cited in later articles as established fact.[20]

No doubt there were graves in Kosovo that contained two or more persons—which was NATO's definition of a "mass grave." As of November 1999, the total number of bodies that the Western grave diggers claimed to have discovered was 2,108, "and not all of them necessarily war-crimes victims," the *Wall Street Journal* reported.[24] People were killed by bombs and by the extensive land war that went on between Yugoslav and KLA forces. Some of the dead, as even the *New York Times* allowed, "are fighters of the Kosovo Liberation Army or may have died ordinary deaths"—as would happen in any population of 2.4 million over the course of a year.[25] And we know that civilians were killed by the KLA itself and by NATO's own bombs—as NATO officials, after initial denials, were forced to admit. The attack on refugee columns along the Prizren-Djakovica road on April 14, and in Korisa on May 13 were two admitted examples.[26]

No doubt there also were despicable grudge killings and executions of prisoners and innocent civilians as in any war, but not on a scale that would warrant the label of genocide or justify the death, destruction and misery inflicted upon Yugoslavia by bombings and sanctions. The absence of mass killings means that the ICTY indictment of Milosevic '"becomes highly questionable," argues Richard Gwyn. "Even more questionable is the West's continued punishment of the Serbs."[28] In sum, NATO leaders used vastly inflated estimates of murdered Kosovo Albanians as a pretext to intrude themselves upon the internal affairs of a sovereign nation, destroy much of

its social production, and invade and occupy a large portion of its territory in what can only be termed a war of aggression.

PHILIP KNIGHTLEY ON "THE FIRST CASUALTY"

The atrocity story is a tried and tested way of arousing hatred. It fortifies the mind of the nation with "proof" of the depravity of the enemy and the cruel and degenerate conduct of his war. ... President Milosevic, from being a pragmatic leader that the West could do business with, became a new Genghis Khan and significantly, a new Hitler. ... So all those in government who supported the NATO war, from the Prime Minister down, began to pepper their speeches with words like "Holocaust" and "genocide."...

Teams of frustrated war correspondents raced each other into Kosovo with one story on their minds: atrocities. Who would find the biggest and the worst? The Ministry of Defense had even prepared a map indicating possible sites of mass graves to help them. ... In this scramble for atrocity stories, prudent skepticism was lost. Reporters seemed ready to believe anything as long as it painted the Serbs as monsters.[27]

Ethnic Cleansing, KLA-NATO Style

What is still not widely understood in the West is that most of the ethnic cleansing throughout the former Yugoslavia was perpetrated not by the Serbs but against them. More than one million Serbs were driven from their ancestral homes in the breakaway republics. Some were triply displaced, uprooted from Croatia into Bosnia, then fleeing to Kosovo, and finally ending up in what remained of unoccupied Serbia.[1] As of the year 2000, the

rump nation of Yugoslavia hosted more displaced persons per capita than just about any other nation, including some 300,000 who had always lived in Serbia and were internally displaced by the NATO bombing and related hardships.[2]

Three well-constructed refugee settlements built by the Yugoslav Republic of Serbia, intended as permanent homes, were destroyed by NATO air attacks, as was the headquarters of the Serbian Socialist party agency that dealt with the daunting refugee problem.[3] The NATO attacks not only greatly increased the number of refugees but also destroyed many of the resources needed to cope with them, further exacerbating the FRY's housing and unemployment problems and adding to its deepening poverty.[4]

Soon after NATO troops rolled into Kosovo, it was widely reported that the KLA itself had disarmed and disbanded. In fact, by early 2000, it was generally understood that KLA gunmen had not disarmed in any appreciable numbers. KLA personnel became the core of a civilian police force and administrative staff, the Kosovo Protection Corps, that did even less than the KFOR troops (NATO's Kosovo Force) to protect the non-Albanian minorities from violence. Indeed, former KLA members were soon involved in the misdeeds, including torturing and killing local citizens and illegally detaining others.[5] The rule of law in Kosovo was visibly inverted, as criminals and terrorists became the law officers. John Pilger writes:

> [We have witnessed] the installation of a paramilitary regime with links to organized crime. Indeed, Kosovo may become the world's first Mafia state ... with war criminals, common murderers and drug traders forming an 'interim administration' that will implement the 'free-market reforms' required by the US and Europe. Their supervisors are the World Bank and the European Development Bank, whose aim is to ensure that Western mining, petroleum and construction companies share the booty of Kosovo's extensive natural resources: a fitting finale to the new moral crusade.[6]

In the first few months that Kosovo was under KFOR occupation, 200,000 Serbs were driven from the province and hundreds were killed by KLA gunmen in what were described in the Western press as acts of revenge and retaliation, as if Serb civilians were not themselves war victims but war criminals deserving of retribution. Certainly that seemed to be the

impression Cheryl Atkinson strove for when she began a CBS evening news report on the KLA attacks against minorities by saying, “Payback in Kosovo!”[7]

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “A wave of arson and looting of Serb and Roma homes throughout Kosovo has ensued. Serbs and Roma remaining in Kosovo have been subject to repeated incidents of harassment and intimidation, including severe beatings. Most seriously, there has been a spate of murders and abductions of Serbs since mid-June, including the late-July massacre of Serb farmers.”[8]

A joint report by the OSCE and UNHCR describes “a climate of violence and impunity” with attacks being directed against the dwindling Serb, Roma, Turkish, Egyptian, Jewish, and Gorani (Muslim Slav) populations.[9] Within months of the NATO occupation of Kosovo, reported the Philadelphia Inquirer, “a sinister pattern of violence and intimidation is emerging. Serb houses are bombed and set ablaze” and Serbs are beaten and murdered in what amounts to “systematic ethnic cleansing.”[10] (Most mainstream publications avoided the term “ethnic cleansing” as applied to the forced expulsion of Serbs and other minorities from Kosovo.)

Cedda Prlincevic, the leader of Pristina’s small Jewish community, told how Jews—who had lived securely when Kosovo was under Serbian rule—were driven from their homes, which were then pillaged and vandalized. KFOR saw it all, and allowed it to happen, he claimed. Before the war, Prlincevic insisted, he had never encountered anti-Semitism, from either Serbs or Albanians. Most of the Jews in Pristina had already intermarried or were the products of intermarriage, being Serbian-Jewish, Roma-Jewish, Albanian-Jewish, and the like. “We [Jews] were not driven out from Kosovo by Albanians from Pristina but by Albanians from Albania ... they are in Kosovo now.”[11]

LIBRARY CLEANSING

Representatives of the Historical Archive in Kosovska Mitrovica report that, since the arrival of KFOR, Albanian terrorists have destroyed more than two million books in the Serbian language. . . . Important archival material has also been destroyed. Nothing has been done by KFOR to protect the books in libraries and other cultural institutions. Thus the works of Shakespeare, Goethe, and other famous writers are burned in front of soldiers from their countries. Hardest hit are communal libraries in the cities of Prizren, Djakovica, Istok, Glogovac, Srbica, Podujevo, all of them under control of Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) members.[12] [Had Milosevic taken to burning non-Serbian books, we would still be hearing about it.]

UN officials admit "there was growing evidence that the Kosovo Albanian leadership was behind some of the harassment and was encouraging the formation of an intolerant monoethnic state."[13] Certain Albanian newspapers, especially Bota Sot, "are full of hate speech directed at Serbs, Roma, and even moderate Albanians, with even some incitement to violence."[14] Kosovo Albanians themselves have been victimized by gun/thug rule. In Pristina, the provincial capital, there was growing fear of kidnappings. "[Albanian] teenagers, both boys and girls, are being abducted off the streets," said Major Simon Plummer of Britain's Royal Greenjackets regiment. Some fifteen cases were reported in two weeks. Corporal Mark Moss, who was leading one of the British security patrols, said the problem was difficult to stop. He referred to reports of "an Albanian mafia coming across the border and abducting them [teenagers] into prostitution in Germany and Italy. ... It's a definite problem. You will not see a single girl alone on the streets; they only go out in packs. Relatives take them to school."[15]

Also forced into exile or otherwise victimized were Albanians who had "collaborated" with the Serbs by opposing separatism, or by working for the federal government or the Serbian Republic, or identifying themselves

as Yugoslavs, or just speaking Serbian. Catholic Albanians complained of intimidation and violence directed against themselves. Moderate Albanians, who spoke out against the violence perpetrated against Serbs and other minorities, were subjected to threats. Many quickly learned to keep quiet. Under NATO's permissive regency, KLA gunmen assassinated Albanian political opponents, including supporters of the Kosovo Democratic League (KDL), a competing separatist organization that was sometimes branded a “traitor” group by the KLA for not being sufficiently committed to armed struggle. When the KLA murdered Fehmi Agani, a KDL leader, the Serbs were blamed for the killing by NATO spokesperson and propagandist Jamie Shea.[16]

The International Crisis Group, a private strategy organization chaired by former United States Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, cites mounting evidence that the KLA has “lashed out at political rivals.” The anti-independence Reform Democratic Party of Albanians (RDPA), for example, claimed that “six of its members were killed in Djakovica, two killed and ten reported missing in Mitrovica, nine disappeared in Pristina and twelve reported missing in Pec.” NATO itself reported that 379 people had been murdered in the first five months of its occupation of Kosovo. Of these, 135 (35 per cent of the total) were Serbs, despite making up just 5 per cent of Kosovo’s population. A further 145 (38 per cent) were ethnic Albanians and 99 (26 per cent) were of unknown or other ethnicity.[17]

One of the hardest hit groups in the KLA cleansing of Kosovo was the Romany people. Driven out of homes they had lived in for generations, many Roma fled to Macedonia—only to find the refugee camps there being run by the KLA. In order to gain entry, they had to pay 500 German marks and declare Albanian nationality, according to refugees interviewed by Sani Rifati, president of Voice of Roma, an educational and humanitarian aid organization based in California. Rifati traveled to Italy to deliver aid and interview Romany refugees arriving in Brindisi. They told of being surrounded by police upon arrival, then approached by Albanian interpreters who informed them that in order to procure food they would have to present themselves as Albanians fleeing from Serbs—instead of what they really were: Roma fleeing from KLA militia and other toughs.[18]

Other Romany refugees testified that KFOR collaborated with the KLA in the expulsion of Roma.[19]

A survey in late 1999 by independent researcher Paul Polansky placed the number of Roma remaining in Kosovo at approximately 30,000. He reported that since the KFOR occupation began, more than 14,000 Roma homes had been burnt. Aid agencies also discriminated against the Roma. “In many districts,” Polansky writes, “I found the Mother Teresa Society openly refusing to deliver food to Gypsies. Islamic Relief also seems to have a policy of not providing aid to Gypsies although the Roma are Muslim.” Albanian officials accused the Roma of being allied with the Serbs—because of their loyalty to Yugoslavia and lack of support for Albanian supremacy in Kosovo.[20]

OSCE monitors entrusted with preparing for elections “expressed especially strong alarm over the ugly atmosphere that is spreading across the province.” A prime example was the Prizren region. Under the earlier Yugoslav communist government, Prizren had been “a center of culture and learning,” and “had always been regarded as an example of tolerance and multi-ethnic harmony in Kosovo.” Under NATO/ KLA rule, the region was ravaged by ethnic purges.[21] The OSCE reported that “revenge-inspired violence against Kosovar Serbs had grown worse since the NATO troops arrived. The report made clear that the attacks often occurred under the nose of the troops, a contention that NATO denied.”[22] Accounts by Kosovo Serbs of KFOR noninterference and even active collaboration with Albanian gunmen who set about beating, intimidating, confining, or deracinating Serbs support the OSCE complaint.[23]

According to a *New York Times* story, “the patrols of the NATO-led peacekeeping force are generally static and unaggressive. The burning of Serbs’ homes takes place almost daily in an organized fashion... Meanwhile, the NATO occupying force of 50,000 and its officials were doing little to restore a civil structure. Justice was rare; perpetrators were seldom apprehended; court trials were almost nonexistent. So “apartment thefts, extortion and even murders [took] place with near impunity, some of it [sic] a function of organized crime.”[24]

The United Nations civilian mission in Kosovo was seriously underfunded and had no ability to restore public services or public security. Its budget suffered a shortfall of $150 million—the price of half a day's NATO bombing.[25] The Western powers had plenty of money for war but little with which to build a decent peace.

A 332-page OSCE report noted that Kosovo was a territory beset by unchecked lawlessness with "a disturbing pattern" of ethnically motivated violence by men dressed in uniforms of the former KLA. Bernard Kouchner wrote a forward to the OSCE report in which he took the opportunity to demonize the Serbs. He asserted that Yugoslav and Serb forces had used "executions, arbitrary arrests, torture, rape, and other forms of sexual violence" in their campaign against the KLA and were the main culprits.[26] The burden of Kouchner s comments was to urge readers to give less weight to the confirmed OSCE findings about KLA atrocities in the report and more weight to the unconfirmed media-marketed stories about Serbian genocide and unspecified "forms of sexual violence" that served as the pretext for NATO's intervention.

Albanian extremists also systematically set about to eradicate the Serbian religious and historical culture in Kosovo and Metohija by destroying some eighty parish churches, monasteries, and cathedrals, some of them world-renowned, dating back to early medieval times. Some were considered priceless jewels of medieval art and architecture that had managed to survive centuries of turmoil, including Nazi occupation. Other historical Serbian Orthodox landmarks in the UNESCO World Heritage list were destroyed.[27]

Western leaders treated the NATO bombings of 1999 as having put an end to the widespread violence. The truth is something else. According to a report by the International Crisis Group, in the two months before the US-NATO air strikes, an average of thirty people a week were killed in Kosovo, about half of whom were Serbs and half Albanians. Under NATO occupation, the rate of killing was about the same as before the bombings, thirty or so a week.[28] The very level of killing that had been depicted as a human rights catastrophe and used to justify an eleven-week bombardment, continued after the bombardment, "with barely a mention by the Western

governments that prosecuted the war and the media organizations that promoted it."[29]

There were additional everyday casualties as Kosovo residents, including Albanians, continued to be killed or maimed by the large number of NATO cluster bombs sprinkled over the land, and by mines planted by both KLA and Serb forces during the 1999 fighting.[30] Pilger refers to the scant reports that appeared in US and British newspapers telling how parts of Kosovo were turned into a no-man's land "littered with unexploded bomblets," delayed-action clusters that inflicted "horrific wounds" upon Albanian children.[31] In sum, NATO's aerial aggression accomplished nothing, except to deliver a magnitude of death and destruction across Yugoslavia far greater than any it claimed to arrest.

Rational Destruction: Eliminating The Competition

Whatever the issue or policy at hand, it is the function of bourgeois intellectuals, academics among them, to deny that material interests are at stake. So with the NATO mission in the Balkans. While professing to having been discomforted by the aerial destruction of Yugoslavia, many liberals and progressives were convinced that "this time" the US national security state was really fighting the good fight. "Yes, the bombings don't work. The bombings are stupid!" they said at the time, "but we have to do something." In fact, the air campaign was worse than stupid: it was profoundly immoral. And in fact it did work, destroying much of what was left of Yugoslavia, moving it closer to becoming a more privatized, deindustrialized, recolonized, beggar-poor country of cheap labor and rich resources available at bargain prices, defenseless against capital penetration, so divided that it would never reunite, so battered that it would never rise again, not even as a viably competitive bourgeois country.

When the productive social capital of any part of the world is obliterated, the potential value of private capital elsewhere is enhanced—especially when the chronic problem faced today by western capitalism is one of

overcapacity. Every agricultural base destroyed by western aerial attacks (as in Iraq) or by WTO “free trade” agreements (as in Mexico, India, Africa, and elsewhere) diminishes the potential competition and increases the market opportunities for multinational corporate agribusiness. To destroy publicly run Yugoslav factories that produced auto parts, appliances, or fertilizer—or publicly financed Sudanese or Yugoslav plants that produced pharmaceuticals at prices substantially below those of their Western competitors—is to enhance the investment value of Western automotive and pharmaceutical companies. And every television or radio station closed down by NATO troops or blown up by NATO bombs extends the ideological and communicational dominance of the Western media cartels. In a word, the aerial destruction of Yugoslavia’s social capital served a rational class interest.

NATO’s attacks revealed a consistent pattern that bespoke its underlying political agenda. The Confederation of Trade Unions of Serbia produced a list of 164 factories destroyed by the bombings—all of them state-owned. Not a single foreign-owned firm was targeted.[1] As I observed on a trip to Yugoslavia shortly after the war, the huge, state-run Hotel Yugoslavia was made uninhabitable by NATO missiles, while the corporate owned Hyatt Hotel, with its all-glass facade—as inviting a target as any mad bomber might want—suffered not a scratched window-pane. Buildings that displayed highly visible rooftop signs that advertised Panasonic, Coca-Cola, Diners Club International, and McDonald's, the latter replete with immense golden arches, survived perfectly intact.

Other political targets were hit. The Usee business center was struck by several missiles, rather precisely hitting the headquarters of Slobodan Milosevic's Socialist Party, along with the headquarters of JUL (Yugoslav United Left), a coalition of twenty-three communist and left parties, closely allied with the Socialist Party. Buildings used by the ministries of defense and the interior were also demolished. NATO destroyed or seriously damaged fuel storage facilities, oil refineries, chemical factories, roads, bridges, railway networks, airports, water supply systems, electrical power plants, and warehouses. This destruction paralyzed the production of consumer goods and added more than a million people to the ranks of the unemployed.

Kragujevac, an industrial city in Central Serbia, suffered immense damage. Its mammoth, efficiently state-run Zastava factory was demolished, causing huge amounts of toxic chemicals to spill from the factory's generators. Zastava had employed tens of thousands of workers who produced cars, trucks, and tractors sold domestically and abroad. NATO attacks left some 80 per cent of its workforce without a livelihood. Publicly owned Zastava factories exist all over Yugoslavia. The attackers knew their locations, and destroyed many of them. Those not bombed were out of production for want of crucial materials or a recipient for their products.[2]

It has been argued that the Yugo, the inexpensive state-produced automobile, could never really compete with Western European or Japanese cars. But the Yugo was the most frequently used vehicle in Yugoslavia itself. It also sold some 180,000 in the United States in the 1980s, and many more in other countries. But by 2000 it was almost entirely out of production and gave no competition to overseas auto markets nor to whatever market remained in Yugoslavia.

In Nis, cruise missiles pulverized the tobacco and cigarette production plant, one of the most successful in Europe. Numerous state-run food-processing sites were leveled. A report by NBC has confirmed that NATO bombed the pharmaceutical complex of Galenika, the largest in Yugoslavia, located in Belgrade's suburbs. Our delegation was told that one worker-managed factory was contaminated with depleted uranium. The city of Aleksinac and additional socialist strongholds in southern Serbia were bombed especially heavily, resulting in many civilian deaths. Leaders from Aleksinac and several other cities in Serbia's “Red Belt” were convinced that they were pounded so mercilessly primarily because they were socialist, a suspicion reinforced by the fact that the region contained almost no heavy industry.

In Novi Sad, worker-managed factories that somehow had survived the pitiless years of sanctions were reduced to ruins, along with bus and train depots. Major bridges were knocked down, blocking all shipping on the Danube, contaminating the river's bottom with toxic chemicals and heavy

metals, and severing most of Serbia from the rest of Europe. Because of its depth, the Danube was judged nearly impossible to clean.

Yugoslav electrical and construction firms used to be competitive with Western ones, winning contracts abroad on a regular basis. The NATO bombing eliminated that competition quite nicely. Heating plants and the entire oil-processing industry were badly crippled. Missiles that explode only after penetrating the earth's surface (being designed to destroy subterranean bomb shelters) were used to rip apart underground transmitter cables at an electrical power transformer station on the outskirts of Zemun. There was little hope of repairing these since international sanctions deprived the Yugoslavs of the replacement parts made by Westinghouse.[3]

NATO attacks also were intended to terrorize and demoralize the civilian population. Libraries, theaters, hospitals, clinics, maternity wards, sanitariums, and geriatric homes were destroyed or badly damaged, with serious injury or loss of life to occupants. Schools attended by several hundred thousand students were destroyed or damaged. NATO bombed historic sites, cultural monuments, museums, and churches—something not even Hitler did.

The inability to rebuild their power supply transmitters left many towns and cities throughout Serbia bereft of sufficient heat in the winter, and without drinkable water supplies for certain urban populations. There is no shortage of water in Yugoslavia, but water distribution and purification systems were badly damaged and not easily repaired. As of the summer of 1999, whole sectors of the city of Novi Sad were without drinking water (although water was available for washing clothes and waste elimination). Clean drinking water for Belgrade was also getting difficult because the drinking water facility at Zarkovo had been bombed.

Sometimes the NATO attackers carefully selected their targets; other times they unloaded seemingly at random. I visited a housing project of some seventy units that had been destroyed. The surviving occupants had lost all their possessions, and most were without money to pay for new residences. Many of the survivors had sustained injuries, and many were suffering psychological shock and depression. An adjacent elementary

school, named after Svetozar Markovich, identified as “the founder of socialism in the Balkans,” was seriously damaged.

A village outside Novi Sad containing nothing remotely resembling a military or infrastructure target had ten homes destroyed. Some of the structures, looking like stage sets with front walls and rooftops missing, were occupied by Serb refugees from Croatia. They were without jobs and funds to buy the materials needed to rebuild. Nor were building materials readily available. So they made do with plastic sheets over shattered windows and an outdoor cooking stove. In various towns there had been deliberate attacks on residential areas. In one day in Nis, twenty-three people were killed and seventy wounded, mostly by cluster bombs—our tax dollars at work. (Cluster bombs cannot destroy structures, only people.) Members of our delegation met with individuals who still shook with fear when talking about the attacks. Most had no hope of rebuilding.

Not long after the bombing ended, NATO officials announced that only a few hundred people had been killed by the aerial attacks. How they arrived at this figure from afar is hard to understand. As already noted, Yugoslav sources claim that over 500 military personnel and some 2,000 civilians perished in what was less a war than a one-sided slaughter. Scores of individuals listed as missing may still be buried under the wreckage. An additional 6,000 were wounded or injured, many left with serious and permanent disabilities.

A LIBERAL SINGS HOSANNAS TO IMPERIALISM

For globalization to work, America can’t be afraid to act like the almighty superpower it is. ... The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist—McDonald’s cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the designer of the F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley’s technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps.[4]

Officials thought the seventy-eight days of bombings would be the worst of it, but they subsequently concluded that the sanctions would continue to inflict widespread suffering. With sanctions came severe shortages of medicines, surgical materials, oncology drugs, diabetic medications, and other supplies. The Yugoslav Red Cross had no problem recruiting blood donors, but it faced a drastic shortage of blood bags, which are not manufactured in Yugoslavia. It issued an urgent appeal for baby food, powdered milk, canned foods, cooking oil, rice, beans, pasta, preserved vegetables, detergents, soaps, tents, bedding, and oil lamps. Also needed were medical supplies of every sort, along with disinfectants and water purification supplies.

Prevented from going into Kosovo, the Yugoslav Red Cross was unable to trace hundreds of missing persons (Serbs, nonseparatist Albanians, and others) in areas occupied by KFOR. Some 130 humanitarian organizations were pouring aid into Kosovo, including Red Cross societies from KFOR states, but few were attending to the rest of Yugoslavia. Only a few national Red Cross societies responded well to Yugoslavia's appeal for help: the Bulgarian, Romanian, and the Scandinavian Red Cross organizations sent aid. Assistance also came from Red Cross organizations in China and Germany.[5]

A goal of US policy has long been to establish a worldwide media monopoly and ideological control known as “objective, responsible news coverage.” Much of Yugoslavia's national media was operated by those who refused to view the world as did the US State Department, the White House, and the corporate-owned US news media—something that was not to be tolerated. It was for this reason among others that most Yugoslav television and radio stations were targeted for destruction.

NATO’s aggression was directed not only against Yugoslavia’s people and production facilities but also against its ecology. Serbia is one of the greatest sources of underground waters in Europe, and the contamination from tons of depleted uranium and other explosives continued to be felt in the surrounding area all the way to the Black Sea. NATO bombed national parks and reservations that had made Yugoslavia one of the world’s thirteen richest bio-diversity regions.[6]

In Pancevo alone, huge amounts of ammonia were released into the air when NATO hit the fertilizer factory. In that same city, a petrochemical plant was bombed seven times. After 20,000 tons of crude oil were burnt up in only one bombardment of an oil refinery, a massive cloud of smoke hung in the air for ten days. Some 1,400 tons of ethylene dichloride, along with vast quantities of hydrogen chloride, liquid chlorine, liquid ammonia, and other toxins spilled into the Danube, the source of drinking water for ten million people. Meanwhile, concentrations of polyvinyl chloride were released into the atmosphere at more than 10,000 times the permitted level. In some areas, people have broken out in red blotches and blisters, and health officials predict sharp increases in cancer rates in the years ahead.[7]

A study prepared for the European Commission found that radioactive air pollution was detected in some areas of Yugoslavia as a result of NATO's use of uranium-tipped shells. NATO has confirmed that each anti-tank shell fired by a US Air Force Thunderbolt aircraft contained 275 grams of depleted uranium (DU). Since uranium is 1.7 times as dense as lead, DU used in shells can easily cut through ordinary steel armor. US forces had also used these weapons extensively during the 1991 Gulf War. When a DU shell hits steel armor, it starts to burn and releases small particles of radioactive uranium oxide into the air. These particles travel with the wind and are ingested or inhaled by humans, who then wind up with a radioactive hot spot lodged in lungs or intestines, bringing cancer, birth defects, and premature death—as has been happening to dramatic numbers of people in Iraq.[8] The EC report describes depleted uranium as "perhaps the most dangerous" of the "carcinogenic and toxic substances."[9] It has a half-life of 4.5 billion years. In March 2000, it was leaked from within NATO that in the eleven weeks of bombing ten tons of depleted uranium were dropped on Yugoslavia.[10]

Yugoslav authorities fear that depleted uranium was fired in agricultural areas where livestock graze and crops are grown "thereby introducing the specter of possible contamination of the food chain."[11] Over thirty agricultural centers were badly damaged. The destruction of fertilizer and nitrogen plants created additional difficulties for food production. I was told by one official in Novi Sad that crops were mysteriously dying. The death of crops may be no mystery at all. As noted in chapter twelve, Spanish air

force pilot Captain Martin de la Hoz, who flew an F-18 during the bombing missions, stated that, among other things, bombs containing depleted uranium and toxic sprayings designed to poison crops were dropped on military and nonmilitary targets in Yugoslavia. In the last ten days of the war, agricultural targets were the main objectives of NATO attacks.

There are many ways to Third Worldize a country: deprive it of markets and trade, retard its technological development, undermine its financial structure, privatize and deindustrialize its industry, impoverish and demoralize its people. One of the quickest ways to do much of this is by using massive military force to destroy its infrastructure and productive base, and seriously damage its ecological system. This is what NATO's humanitarian bombing of Yugoslavia accomplished.

Multiculturalism In Yugoslavia

US leaders have targeted various countries as “rogue nations” and then subjected them to economic isolation and military attack. Roughly the same propaganda process is applied in each instance. First, the leaders are demonized. Qaddafi of Libya was a “Hitlerite megalomaniac” and a “madman.” Noriega of Panama was a “swamp rat,” one of the world's worst “drug thieves and scums,” and “a Hitler admirer.” Saddam Hussein of Iraq was “the Butcher of Baghdad,” a “madman,” and “worse than Hitler.” And Milosevic was the “ruthless” and “brutal” dictator, branded “a new Hitler” by President Clinton. Each of these leaders are denounced for committing horrendous—if usually unspecified—crimes and for being a menace to the peace and security of their region. If not blatantly false, such charges are usually inflated.

This is not to say that such “rogue state” leaders have never committed acts of repression or other violations of democratic process and international law. But they have been no worse than—and, in the case of Milosevic, not nearly as bad as—leaders of the many repressive fascistic states that have benefited from generous helpings of US assistance. In fact, it is the cozy collusion between US leaders and murderous thugs like Batista of Cuba, Somoza of Nicaragua, Salazar of Portugal, Pinochet of

Chile, the Shah of Iran, Marcos of the Philippines, Suharto of Indonesia, and others too numerous to mention, that makes the sudden indignation expressed toward a Noriega, Qaddafi, Saddam, or Milosevic so suspect. What is really offensive about these four is that they were all guilty of charting a somewhat independent course of self-development. They were not in perfect compliance with the dictates of the global free market and the US national security state.[1]

It should be remembered that Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic was not always consigned to this rogue's gallery. At first, the West viewed the ex-banker as a Serbian nationalist who might be useful to them. As late as 1995, the Clinton administration accepted Milosevic as a negotiating partner and guarantor of the Dayton Accords in Bosnia, even praising him for the many concessions he made. Only later, when they saw him as an obstacle rather than a tool, did US policy makers begin to depict him as having been all along the demon who “started all four wars.” This was too much even for the managing editor of the US-establishment journal Foreign Affairs, Fareed Zakaria, who noted that Milosevic—who rules “an impoverished country that has not attacked its neighbors—is no Adolf Hitler. He is not even Saddam Hussein.“[2]

Once certain leaders are demonized in the public eye, US forces feel free to attack their countries, kill substantial numbers of their citizens, and impose crippling economic sanctions on them. US and UK leaders have repeatedly described Yugoslavia as a dictatorship that brooks no opposition, where a controlled press keeps people from knowing what is really going on, and where citizens cower before what British Defense Secretary George Robertson called Milosevic's “murder machine.” But was the Yugoslav government a dictatorship of such diabolic magnitude that they would justify a war of aggression against its people? Consider some components of the FRY system:

Political Process

Under Communist rule, the various republics within the FRY were endowed with rights of equal constitutional status. The Communists exercised a near monopoly of public power (most weakly in Kosovo) and

“enjoyed wide support within the population as the guarantors of all the positive elements in the system and as the people who had led a successful resistance against fascism.”[3]

As for elections in the post-cold war era, representatives of the British Helsinki Human Rights Group (BHHRG) monitored the parliamentary and presidential contests held in Serbia in the autumn of 1997. Their report, published on the group's Web page, “found many shortcomings in the Serbian election process” but “these were no more serious than those observed in other places—the Yugoslav republic of Montenegro, for example—which was hailed as exemplary by other international monitoring groups.” No mystery here: an anti-socialist opposition won in Montenegro. That makes all the difference in how the election is perceived in Washington. If the results are what Washington wants, then the election is applauded for being fair and democratic. But if the wrong party is elected, then the election is denounced as unfair and rigged; the resulting government is branded “undemocratic” while the losers are championed as “the democratic opposition.”

This same ideological labeling was applied to Nicaragua and the Sandinistas, who conducted fair and open elections according to teams of foreign observers, but made the mistake of winning them and then pursuing social reforms that benefited the impoverished many rather than the privileged few. Their government was condemned as autocratic and Nicaragua was condemned to years of US-sponsored terrorist violence and destabilization. Only when the exhausted and battered Nicaraguans buckled under and voted for the US-financed free-market opponents—on Washington’s promise of peace if they did—were Nicaraguan elections hailed as free and democratic.[4]

Milosevic, even the *New York Times* acknowledged, “won elections that outside observers said were more or less fair.”[5] At the end of 1999, he presided over a coalition government that included four parties, and faced several opposition parties in parliament. No matter. Since he still pursued economic policies that did not win the approval of the Western free-marketeers, he continued to be labeled a brutal dictator.

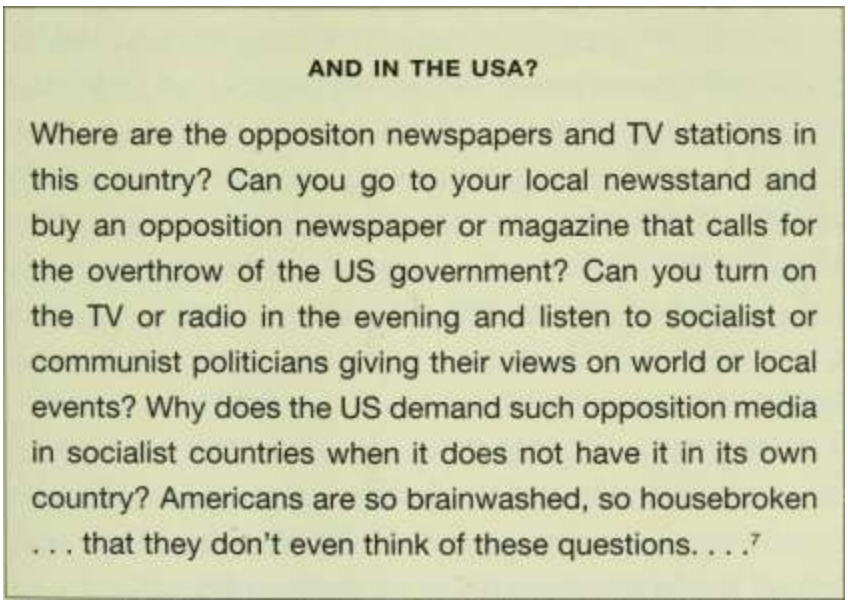
After serving two consecutive terms as president of Serbia, Milosevic honored the Yugoslav constitution’s prohibition against a third term. He next stood for election as president of Yugoslavia itself. Such constitutional propriety has not been observed by everyone in the region. Slovenia’s president, Milan Kucan, served three terms in office, disregarding his country’s two-term limitation. Izetbegovic repeatedly violated the Bosnian Federation’s yearly rotating presidency by refusing to step down. In Albania, the Sali Berisha government lasted until 1996 as a corrupt dictatorship that rigged elections and imprisoned the opposition leader. In these and other post-Communist nations, such as Georgia, pro-capitalist incumbents continued to hold office in violation of constitutional term limits, without a word of disapproval from Western defenders of democratic constitutionalism.[6]

Media Access

US officials and press pundits repeatedly claimed that Yugoslavs did not have the benefit of an objective news source, by which they meant the Western corporate-owned monopoly media that faithfully propagates the US-NATO line on all matters of war and peace. In fact, Yugoslavs could read a variety of opposition newspapers or listen to opposition radio and television stations. They could get CNN, BBC, the Discovery Channel, and German television. If they had satellite dishes, as many did, they could receive all the US networks. Not surprisingly, the Yugoslav opposition television channel, Studio B, survived untouched by NATO bombs. It presented mostly opposition programming and entertainment—and still does.

The severest media censorship in Yugoslavia was exercised not by the government but by NATO itself, in a most bloody fashion. Its aerial assaults destroyed Yugoslavia's three government TV channels and dozens of local radio and television stations—killing sixteen people, mostly journalists, in the process. To get its own message out, the government took over portions of air time usually reserved for private broadcasting. In all, the Yugoslavs had access to more pro-Western media than to any that might represent a critical view of NATO policy. In this, they resembled most of the world. Yugoslavia's sin was not that it had a media monopoly but that the publicly

owned portion of its media deviated from the Western media monopoly that blankets most of the world, including Yugoslavia itself.



AND IN THE USA?

Where are the oppositon newspapers and TV stations in this country? Can you go to your local newsstand and buy an opposition newspaper or magazine that calls for the overthrow of the US government? Can you turn on the TV or radio in the evening and listen to socialist or communist politicians giving their views on world or local events? Why does the US demand such opposition media in socialist countries when it does not have it in its own country? Americans are so brainwashed, so housebroken . . . that they don't even think of these questions. . . .[7]

Opposition and Dissent

After visiting Yugoslavia during the NATO bombings in May 1999, a BHHRG delegation reported that they "failed to detect signs of the sort of behavior associated with a classic dictatorship." People openly criticized Milosevic, but did not blame him for causing the war. Many said that they "never voted for his party, the SPS [Serbian Socialist Party], but while the country is under attack they must stand together whatever their political persuasion."[8] Both before and after the NATO aerial battering, numerous anti-Milosevic foreign-funded NGOs continued to operate freely in the country. Thousands demonstrated against the government without fear of being gunned down by death squads or incarcerated for long periods—which is the risk demonstrators run in any number of US-backed regimes. During a visit to Belgrade in 1999, I saw opposition posters denouncing the government along main thoroughfares, with the address of the sponsoring organization provided at the bottom of the poster—hardly an advisable way to operate when living under the heel of a ruthless dictator. In addition, Yugoslav citizens are free to travel anywhere in the world—which is not true of US citizens.

Writing from Belgrade, *Washington Post* reporter William Drozdiak called Milosevic “a man renowned for his ruthlessness in wielding power.” Yet satirical revues that mercilessly lampooned the leader continued to be performed before capacity crowds. “Milosevic,” says Drozdiak, “has allowed a remarkable degree of artistic expression at home, especially in film and theater, that would be unthinkable by many other authoritarian rulers. Even his enemies acknowledge that Milosevic isn't a tyrant in the classical sense of locking up those who criticize him.” He allows “controversial, even insulting, works to reach audiences.” The *Post* reporter goes on to quote a political comedian who says, “These days you can pretty much say and do what you want.” A theater director adds, “This has never been a police state like Iraq. So long as we are not too influential with the masses, we don't have to worry about censorship.”[9]

Milosevic allows criticism and insulting satire because, Drozdiak believes, such things “help let off steam and mitigate threats to his government.” As a dissident film director notes, “Here in Belgrade we are struggling against a very devious and cunning animal who knows just how to manipulate his opponents. You can criticize him, but he's too smart to make you into a martyr or a hero by putting you in prison.”[10] Thus, Milosevic—whom we should not forget was elected president of Yugoslavia in a fair and open contest—was a dictator by media fiat, by a process of labeling that cannot be falsified. If he suppressed dissent, this would be proof of his ruthless tyranny. That he allowed dissent, however, did not negate the packaged image of a ruthless dictator but was all the more proof of his devious and cunning method of control. He is just not a dictator in the “classical” sense.

The demonized image is so firmly entrenched as to make evidence irrelevant. Both A and not-A bring us to the same conclusion. The image not only becomes impervious to contrary information, it is able to transmute contrary data into supportive data. Thus, forms of behavior that do not normally fit the autocratic model (open dissent, democratic elections, opposition parties, political satires and controversy) are facilely transformed into evidence supporting the autocratic model, indicative of the dictator's cunningly manipulative and devious ways.

For a police state, Yugoslavia appeared to have a notable scarcity of police on the streets. Not until my third evening in Belgrade did I see two cops strolling along (without the benefit of nightsticks)—in marked contrast to the omnipresent and heavily armed security police and military personnel one sees in any number of US client-state "democracies" in Latin America and elsewhere. Nor do I recall seeing a police or military presence on the rural roads. The BHHRG group found that the police who asked to examine their cameras (during their wartime visit) were courteous and unthreatening, in marked contrast to local police in Bulgaria and Romania who kept members of the group under a menacing surveillance.[11] Perhaps the low police profile in Yugoslavia was just a cunning ploy to cover the fact that the country was a brutally repressive police state.

War Crimes

The war crimes that the West has charged Milosevic with seem to be far less serious than the war crimes committed by Tudjman or Izetbekovic or, for that matter, Clinton, Blair, and NATO. Although Milosevic was branded throughout the late 1990s as a war criminal of Hitlerian magnitude, he was never charged with any actual crimes. Repeated requests from the International Criminal Tribunal for documentation of his putatively wicked ways went unanswered by the US government for more than two years. Finally in May 1999, as US public support for the bombings began to waver, an indictment against Milosevic was cobbled together. Strangely enough, all the charges after him, except one, refer to incidents that took place after the NATO bombing had commenced. Yet it supposedly was Milosevic's longstanding atrocity policies that had made the bombing so imperative.[12] Another oddity: the number of deaths for which Milosevic was held responsible totaled 391.[13] But it was the repeatedly proclaimed genocidal magnitude of his crimes that supposedly made the extreme measures of bombing cities throughout Yugoslavia so morally imperative.

A "CAPITAL CRIME"

Milosevic did one thing that certainly must have convinced Western leaders that he was the Balkan Beelzebub. The ICN pharmaceutical plant in Yugoslavia began as a joint venture with state and private capital, with much of the latter provided by Milan Panic, a rich Serbian businessman who had been living in the United States. Panic began paying a private staff to take over complete ownership of ICN. (He is also said to have tried to organize a strike against the Yugoslav government after losing his bid for the presidency in 1992.) In February 1999, in response to Panic's takeover maneuvers and his failure to meet financial obligations, Yugoslav troops were sent in to occupy ICN. Then Milosevic handed the entire firm over to worker-management. US media called the takeover a violation of "human rights." The ICN was bombed by NATO in 1999.

In the face of such a relentless propaganda campaign against Milosevic and the Serbs, even prominent personages on the Left—who oppose NATO's policy against Yugoslavia—have felt compelled to genuflect before this orthodoxy. While establishment liberals said, "The Serbs are brutal and monstrous. Let's attack them," some progressives argued, "The Serbs are brutal and monstrous. But let's not attack them, for that would be even worse." Thus did they reveal themselves as having been influenced by the very media propaganda machine they criticized on so many other issues.[14] And they left people with the impression that even those who opposed NATO's war accepted the truth of the war-makers' brief.

Again, it cannot be said too many times: to reject the demonized image of Milosevic and of the Serbian people is not to idealize either nor claim that Yugoslav forces have not committed crimes. It is merely to challenge the one-sided propaganda that laid the grounds for the imperialist dismemberment of Yugoslavia and NATO's far greater criminal onslaught.

Serbian Ethnic Policy

In February 2000, on national television, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright described Slobodan Milosevic as a man “who decides that if you are not of his ethnic group you don't have a right to exist,” a remark that went unchallenged by the interviewer.[15] If we are to believe Albright, Milosevic is a sociopathic Serbian chauvinist who wants to exterminate all other peoples. In truth, while the Serbs were repeatedly accused of ethnic cleansing, Serbia itself—unlike ethnically cleansed Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo—is now the most multi-ethnic society left in the former Yugoslavia, containing some twenty-six nationality groups including tens of thousands of Albanians who live in and around Belgrade, and hundreds of thousands of Hungarians, Croats, Romanians, Czechs, Roma, Jews, Turks, and Slovaks. Yugoslavia was the only country in the Balkans not to have expelled its Turkish minority. It was the only country in the world to give official standing to 19,000 Ruthenians, a national group of western Ukrainian origin situated in Vojvodina, Serbia's other autonomous province (besides Kosovo). Vojvodina officials claim that all these various nationalities have education in their own languages from nursery school to high school. Hungarians in Vojvodina can go through medical school studying in Hungarian.

An estimated 200,000 Muslims live in Belgrade, and many of them have for decades. About 50,000 of these are from Kosovo. The Albanian and Muslim populations in Belgrade are not ghettoized but live scattered about the city. Most are employed in blue-collar jobs. As the London Daily Telegraph reported, Belgrade has been “renowned for its tolerance ... a cosmopolitan city where cafe society flourished; and the tradition has continued.”[17] Federal Minister for Refugees Bratislava Morina, who met with the delegation I traveled with in Belgrade in August 1999, claimed that before the NATO war there had been some fifty Albanian-language publications in Yugoslavia, mostly in Kosovo. She said that in earlier times Albanians had occupied such prominent offices as the presidency of Yugoslavia, the presidencies of the national youth organization and of the trade union association. Albanians would still have prominent political positions in the society, she maintained, had they not chosen to withdraw from the political process. Morina's own husband was director of security and an Albanian, and her children identified themselves as Albanian.

THE DEMONIC ETHNIC CLEANSER?

Milosevic reportedly launched his "ethnic cleansing" campaign against Kosovo in a speech delivered at Kosovo Polje in 1989. Here is an excerpt from that speech:

> Serbia has never had only Serbs living in it. Today, more than in the past, members of other peoples and nationalities also live in it. This is not a disadvantage for Serbia. I am truly convinced that it is to its advantage. National composition of almost all countries in the world today, particularly developed ones, has also been changing in this direction. Citizens of different nationalities, religions, and races have been living together more and more frequently and more and more successfully.
>
> Socialism in particular, being a progressive and just democratic society, should not allow people to be divided in the national and religious respect. The only differences one can and should allow in socialism are between hardworking people and idlers and between honest people and dishonest people. Therefore, all people in Serbia who live from their own work, honestly, respecting other people and other nations, are in their own republic.
>
> After all, our entire country should be set up on the basis of such principles. Yugoslavia is a multinational community and it can survive only under the conditions of full equality for all nations that live in it.[16]

The proceedings of Vojvodina's provincial parliament are simultaneously translated into six languages, according to its president Zivorad Smiljanic, who met with our delegation in Novi Sad. Hungarian separatist elements in Vojvodina, he said, were attempting to put the province under Hungary's suzerainty. Smiljanic maintained that two million Hungarians in Romania and 600,000 in Slovakia enjoyed few of the national rights extended to the 300,000 Hungarian ethnics in Vojvodina, yet the United States and even Hungary seemed not too concerned about them. In 1991, some of the Hungarians living in Vojvodina went to Hungary but did not fare too well, he said. During the NATO war almost no Hungarians departed and 90 per cent responded to the military call. Indeed, all national minorities remain loyal to their country, Yugoslavia, he claimed.

Smiljanic held forth on a number of subjects. He referred to the eleven children killed in Surdulica by the aerial attack.

“Your leaders talk about human rights,” he noted bitterly, “but the right of children to live is among the highest of human rights. Was it democracy in action when NATO bombs destroyed schools, daycare centers, and hospitals with patients in their beds? Your leaders talk of freedom of information, yet they kill journalists.” They talk of responsible government and accountable rule, yet NATO members engaged in hostilities against Yugoslavia “without consent of any of their own parliaments and against mass protests in their countries.”

When asked what his country's most urgent needs, were Smiljanic boomed, “We wish most of all that the international community would leave us alone, lift the sanctions, and stop giving us the benefit of their ‘guidance' and ‘aid.”' Despite ten years of sanctions, he said, his compatriots live better than most people in free-market Hungary, Romania, Poland, or Bulgaria. And now that those nations are joining NATO they will plunge still deeper into debt, each borrowing tens of billions of dollars to upgrade their military forces to NATO standards. “Clinton and Albright have destroyed us and now we will have to rebuild—on their terms,” he concluded. “The only god worshiped in the New World Order is the dollar. The war was good only for business and arms dealers.”[18]

Yugoslavia’s Future: Is It Bulgaria?

In September 1999, an open letter from Blago vesta Doncheva, an erstwhile activist of the Bulgarian anti-Communist “democratic opposition,” described what might be in store for Yugoslavia if and when it is taken over by the kind of neoliberal free-market “democratic opposition” that has already assumed power in Sofia. Bulgaria's present plight, she suggests, offers a sobering glimpse into Yugoslavia's future.

Doncheva had been a member of the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) in Bulgaria until June 1993. UDF is a mirror image of the United Democratic Opposition in Serbia, antisocialist and “pro-West,” that is, dedicated to free-market “democracy.” Like the Serbian opposition parties, the Bulgarian UDF received a great deal of money from abroad, along with cars, computers, and “luxurious placards” for the 1990 election and elections in the years that followed. In exchange, the Bulgarian UDF government provided air and ground corridors to US/NATO forces during the war waged against neighboring Yugoslavia.

In what she describes as the “most awful period of my life on earth,” Doncheva witnessed the UDF “reformers” privatize the Bulgarian economy. “The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are successfully devouring Bulgarian industry, destroying the social fabric.”[1] The Bulgarian government and Western investors first privatized the state-run Bulgarian firms, then liquidated them. Or they sold them for a pittance to powerful foreign corporations. Thus the Copper Metallurgical plant that produced gold and platinum as well as electrolytic copper was sold to the Belgian corporation, Union Miniere, for a nominal price.

Doncheva goes on to describe the dismantling of Bulgaria’s state socialism by Western financial powers and the systematic Third Worldization of her country, although she never calls it that. She notes that Bulgaria’s industry and infrastructure, including the roads, “have been

successfully demolished—and this without bombing—in less than ten years.” Free-market reforms also have created hordes of unemployed, beggars in the streets, and children dying from malnutrition and drugs.[2]

Bulgaria’s population is declining as the death rate climbs and young people are refusing to have children. In addition, as more mothers now suffer from disease and malnutrition, infant mortality has increased. Doncheva reminds her Serbian friends that Bulgaria under the former (Communist) economic system had free medical care, free education, social assistance, and programs for mothers and the elderly. Women could retire at fifty-five, men at sixty. Today the chance to enjoy a secure retirement has disappeared along with many employment opportunities. The number of children who do not go to school is increasing each year. “Only comparatively well-to-do parents or parents who still have some money saved can fulfill their children's desire for a higher education.”

In capitalist Bulgaria, health care has become all but inaccessible for most, as people turn to makeshift home remedies. “Going to the dentist is looked upon as a kind of luxury. There are talks of a drastic raising of all medicine prices. ... The chasm between the handful of rich and the great majority of poor people is disastrously deepening with every day,” Doncheva writes. The low subsidized prices for train tickets for students, women with children, and the elderly had been slated for elimination. Many pensioners add to their meager income with some occasional jobs in the towns or, if they are city dwellers, by providing vegetables and fruit for the winter from their family village gardens—all made possible only because they could travel by train at half price. The higher fares would cause additional hunger and hardship.

Doncheva singles out George Soros, “the international financier of newspapers, radio stations, NGOs and political parties that facilitate the destruction of previously viable nations.” She sees Soros as a prime exponent of the “open society” and “open borders,” leading to the ruination of those plucky few Bulgarian industries that still manage “to stay alive and thereby give bread to a certain number of people.” So-called free trade brings a flood of inferior commodities and processed food products from abroad; these undersell local producers and drive them out of business.

Doncheva lives under extreme economic duress and does not know how long she will be able to go on. But it is the sight of old people digging into the rubbish containers and begging in the streets with trembling outreached hands and tears of pain and humiliation that is most heartbreaking to her. “Street beggars might be a familiar part of the New York scenery. But it is a new and very shocking sight for us here.” She goes on to point out that prices on basic commodities such as bread, shoes, clothing, and utilities have doubled or tripled, while salaries have fallen by 25 per cent or more, and pensions by 50 per cent over the last ten years. “In 1989 [the last year of Communism] my friend's mother had a pension of 105 leva. Now it is 46 leva. Yesterday my brother-in-law told me he had seen the former headmistress of his son's school digging in a garbage can.

Doncheva warns the Serbian “democratic opposition” about being lured by “the sweetened slogans of ‘democracy' (what democracy?) and joining ‘Western civilization' (what civilization are we speaking of?). Do you, the so-called opposition in Serbia really think that the best road for you is joining that ‘civilization'? What will be the bitter fruit of your current efforts? Cheap labor for the US and Western corporations and the humiliating agony of a slow torturous death through a wretched poverty imposed on your people.” NATO's merciless bombing of Yugoslavia, a sovereign European country, revealed the true nature of their “civilization.”

What is the Serbian “democratic opposition” striving for? she asks. “The dismal, hopeless life of their Bulgarian neighbors? Do they really want to see their children going without money for shoes and textbooks? Do they really want to slave for the American or German corporations twelve hours per day for miserable pay?” They should keep in mind that the greatest attraction for a foreign corporation in a devastated country like Yugoslavia is the cheap sweatshop labor.

Doncheva notes that back in 1993 she and her associates in the UDF all believed that the Bulgarian Communist government had simply been lying about life under capitalism. They preferred to believe “the seductive talk about democracy and openness and the rest,” while understanding nothing about the IMF or transnational corporations. But the “so-called Serb Opposition” cannot claim to be so innocent, especially after the US war on

their country and the $100 million Washington is funneling to that opposition. “The issue is not Milosevic,” she concludes. The United States and other Western powers “are reaching greedily” into what remains of Yugoslavia. “Their geopolitical interests and their corporations demand it: they want the land” and what resources Yugoslavia still has.

If not the Bulgaria described by Doncheva, then perhaps Romania might serve as a free-market model for the future Yugoslavia. By the end of the millennium, the average wage in Romania had slipped to $80 a month while prices have climbed precipitously. About one-third of the population subsists on less than two dollars a day. According to the *New York Times*, a publication that usually promotes the glossy side of free-market neoliberalism, “At dawn in Bucharest, the capital, groups of children emerge from the sewers to beg just as they do in the capital of Angola.”[4] Lifetime job security has vanished, unemployment is rampant, and the prison population is burgeoning. A November 1999 poll stunned the capitalist-restorationist Romanian government when it reported that 61 per cent felt that life had been better under the Communist government of Nicolae Ceausescu.[5] Despite the shortages and serious problems under that regime, everyone had some measure of security and the problem of survival was neither an everyday challenge nor frequent tragedy.

FOR INCORRECT THOUGHTS, DONCHEVA SENT TO MENTAL HOSPITAL

On November 16 1999, a group of Sofia citizens gathered at the US Embassy to protest Clinton's visit and the planned location of US bases in Bulgaria. In direct violation of Article 39 of the Bulgarian Constitution, which guarantees every Bulgarian citizen the right to protest, Sofia's mayor Stefan Sofianski, a UDF member, had forbidden all protests against Clinton's visit.

Only fifteen minutes after the demonstrators had assembled, a police van appeared and forcibly dispersed them but not before dragging three women along the ground and throwing them into the van. The three arrested protestors, Madeleine Kircheva, Anka Petkova and Blagovesta Doncheva were detained for two hours. Kircheva and Penkova were then released. But Doncheva was taken to a mental hospital and held incommunicado.[3]

If not Romania, perhaps Yugoslavia's future will resemble Russia, where free market "reforms," privatization and deindustrialization have brought enormous corruption, crime, mass poverty and human misery, in what amounts to another successful Third Worldization. Russia might best be described as a kleptocracy. The devilishly shrewd and ruthlessly corrupt few have stripped the country of much of its assets and driven average citizens deep into poverty, notes retired US colonel Alex Vardamis. "While criminals with foreign bank accounts live in regal splendor, Russian pensioners go hungry."[6]

If not Bulgaria, Romania or Russia, then perhaps Yugoslavia's future is something still worse: Iraq. Iraqis once enjoyed the highest standard of living in the Middle East. But Iraq has been battered by massive Western aerial assaults, and mercilessly strangulated by protracted international sanctions, leading to tens of thousands of deaths each year. Iraq's health system, considered a good one prior to the Gulf War, has been in shambles for more than a decade. The mortality rate due to infectious diseases, many

of which are readily curable, is extremely high. Tuberculosis in particular is on the rise. “Patients suffer and die in hospitals because there are no spare parts to repair damaged equipment,” says Iraqi Minister of Health Dr. Omeed Medhet.[7] As of 2000, because of the sanctions, Iraq had a zero per cent cure rate for leukemia. The cure rate in the US is 70 per cent. In addition, Iraq's water supplies remain contaminated; cholera and typhoid continue to kill. Iraq's previously abundant agricultural base has been destroyed by chemical toxins dropped during the Western aerial assault, including vast amounts of depleted uranium. Food shortages remain severe. Because of malnutrition, many Iraqi children—those who manage to survive infancy—are growing up severely underweight and undersized.

As of 2000, Yugoslavia did seem to be headed in a Third World direction that could go only from bad to worse. A report released in London in August 1999 by the Economist Intelligence Unit concluded that the enormous damage that NATO inflicted on Yugoslavia's infrastructure will cause the economy to shrink dramatically in the next few years.[8] Gross domestic product dropped by 40 per cent in the first year after the bombing, and will stay at levels far below those of a decade earlier. Yugoslavia, the report predicted, will soon become the poorest country in Europe. Mission accomplished.

Privatization As A Global Goal

Why would the forces of finance capital want to dismantle the public sector of Yugoslavia, and for that matter, the public sector of Bulgaria, Romania, and every other country including the United States? Leaders of capitalist nations are dedicated to extending the free-market prerogatives of giant multinational corporations into every corner of the world, a process euphemistically called globalization. The free market is established by eliminating public investments and ownership, rolling back public services, and cutting wage and employment guarantees, worker benefits, trade protections, and nonprofit development programs. The goal is to lay open all national economies and resources to international investors and creditors on terms that are entirely favorable to the investors and creditors. The objective is to demonstrate to the people of the world that, as Margaret

Thatcher is quoted as saying, “There is no alternative” (TINA). Yugoslavia was targeted for being a country that still represented a viable deviation from TINA.

A key maxim of the free-market ideology is that government regulations and public spending are costly burdens detrimental to prosperity, an incubator for inefficiency and parasitism. The lean competitive system of private enterprise can always do things better for less cost than the bloated bureaucratic system of a meddling government. So goes the free-market catechism.

In reality, the investor class is not against all public spending. While representatives of big business preach the virtues of self-reliance to the general public, they themselves run to the government for a whole basketful of handouts. They receive from federal, state, and local governments billions of dollars in start-up capital, research and development funding, equity capital, bailout aid, debt financing, low-interest loans, loan guarantees, export subsidies, tax credits, and other special favors. Courtesy of the US taxpayer, government provides private industry with a publicly funded transportation infrastructure of airports, train depots, port facilities, canals, and harbors. And public capital is used to develop whole sectors of the economy, such as the airline industry, telecommunications, the nuclear industry, the Internet, and various medical and pharmaceutical products—which are then handed over to private corporations to market and reap the profits.

Corporate America relies on government for the ample applications of force and violence needed to keep restive populations in line at home and abroad. Various government agencies involved in surveillance, repression, incarceration, and overall social control are well funded and greatly encouraged by the same conservative lawmakers who otherwise advocate defunding public service agencies. Units of the national security state, the military, the CIA, FBI, DIA, and others, together devour the largest portion of the federal discretionary budget. Hundreds of state, county, and municipal police forces receive generous sums to hire additional officers and buy the latest state-of-the-art equipment, utilized less to fight crime—of

which they usually do an indifferent job—and more to keep a tight lid on social unrest.

So it is not quite correct to say that big business is against big government. It depends on what part of government we are talking about, and whose interests are being served. Propagators of the business ideology tell us that government cannot do anything very well except tax and spend. In truth, corporations have great faith in the ability of government to get certain things done, and get them done right, at least when it comes to helping business stay solvent, aiding business in the creation, production, and distribution of certain commodities and services, and in the deliverance of force and violence against potentially anti-business interests.

However, business is ferociously opposed to those public services that compete with the private profit market, that serve consumers, generating income and consumer buying power by creating public-sector jobs, while taking care of public needs—all done without private industry making a penny of profit. Public housing, public utilities, public transportation, public communication, public health care, and public education—all come under the hungry and jealous eyes of private investors, who forever scan the horizon for new opportunities for capital accumulation, and new ways to siphon off the public treasure.

A growing public sector can diminish opportunities for private profit. It can demonstrate that vital services can be performed without the need for private corporations, and often at lower administrative costs than what the private market would tolerate. One need only consider the retirement fund, survivors subsidies, and disability insurance administered by Social Security, or the public medical care programs of some countries as compared to the costs of private medical insurance and profit-driven HMOs in the United States.

Furthermore, the social wage proffered by the welfare state—in the form of unemployment and disability insurance, pension funds, medical benefits, and income support supplements—provide the working population with alternative sources of income that leave them somewhat less vulnerable to the heartless exactions of the job market. Workers must be divested of any alternative means of subsistence that interferes with the systematic

exploitation of wage labor. Income maintenance programs bolster the bargaining power of workers vis-à-vis employers and thereby cut into profits.[1] By rolling back the social wage and abolishing subsidies that come in the form of public education, public health services and the like, conservative ruling interests leave working people more impoverished than ever. Wages are more easily kept down by having a depressed working class, one that suffers from chronic under-employment, and enjoys no backup benefits or income subsidies.

And that is the goal. For the poorer you be, the harder will you toil for less and less. As a high-placed Tory economic advisor in Britain said, with refreshing candor: “Rising unemployment was a very desirable way of reducing the strength of the working classes. ... What was engineered—in Marxist terms—was a crisis in capitalism which recreated a reserve army of labor, and has allowed the capitalists to make high profits ever since.”[2]

That Americans would not think of toiling from dawn to dusk for pennies, as do less fortunate souls in many Third World countries, is not because they are so much more self-respecting. There was a time, at the end of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth, when people in the United States worked for wages and under conditions that were akin to those found in the worst sweatshops of the Third World. It was only through generations of struggle over the last century that US workers have achieved a measure of economic democracy. The US corporate class grudgingly accedes to those gains, at least for the present, but it has never flagged in its desire to roll them back.

In fact, there already are places within the United States where sweatshop conditions, including longer work hours, subsistence wages, no benefits, no job security, and even child labor are the order of the day. According to the US Department of Labor, the number of minors illegally employed in sweatshops is on the increase. Some 800,000 children and teenagers work as migrant laborers. And the American Academy of Pediatrics estimates that 100,000 children are injured on the job in the United States each year.[3]

Conservative free-marketeers have also advocated privatizing Social Security (which means eliminating the public retirement, survivor

insurance, and disability programs), reducing wages, abolishing the minimum wage, downgrading jobs, cutting back on public education and public health services, softening child labor restrictions, and rolling back health and safety standards, consumer protections, environmental safeguards, and any other benefits and regulations that might cut into profits or give some leverage to working people.

The goal is the Third Worldization of the United States and every other country. Why then should we think it surprising or improbable that international finance capital would not seek the same for Yugoslavia and all other socialistic countries whose continued existence would only set a ff bad example" to the common peoples of the world? The end purpose is to create a world in which there is no alternative to corporate capitalism, a world in which capitalism will be practiced everywhere in every way exactly as the most powerful elements of the capitalist class might desire.

The Aggression Continues

With Kosovo under NATO regency, the crusade against Yugoslavia continued unabated. Like Chile, Nicaragua, Angola, Mozambique, and a number of other countries before it, Yugoslavia was expected to heel with enough battering. "A major sticking point for Western politicians in the past has been Serbia's failure to enter into the right kind of business deals."[1] So US policy remained the same: find fresh opportunities to meddle in the internal affairs of Serbia and Montenegro, destabilize and subvert what remained of the Yugoslav socialist system, and—under the banner of "reform"—foster the kind of rapacious capitalist restoration found in Russia, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania, Georgia, and elsewhere.

In pursuit of that objective, US leaders and the corporate-owned media operate with a kind of ideological fiat that makes argument and evidence superfluous. As noted earlier, political parties that win fair elections but pursue socialist or other economically egalitarian policies, even if only in limited form, are stigmatized as "hard-line," "dictatorial," and "oppressive." The free-market pro-West parties that lose, despite the generous sums

funneled to them from Western intelligence agencies, are championed as the independent “democratic opposition.”[2]

The United States Congress prohibits foreigners from contributing to US political campaigns so to preserve the integrity of our (corporate-funded) electoral system. Yet this same Congress continued to vote large sums to support Radio Free Europe broadcasts and “independent” media in Yugoslavia, and still larger sums to bolster “pro-Western,” “pro-reform” (read, pro-capitalist) political groups in Serbia and Montenegro.[3] Private groups like the Soros Foundation and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—many of which have direct or indirect access to covert funding—have given large sums to opposition groups. The Soros Foundation claims noninvolvement in Eastern European politics, but one of its directors, Bega Rucha, admitted to Barry Lituchy that the foundation provides over $50 million a year to opposition media and political groups in Serbia alone.[4] The Soros Foundation and other NGOs have funded over fifty publications in Yugoslavia, along with the much vaunted Radio B92 station. Well financed free-market political parties have enjoyed some support among entrepreneurial and professional class elements who anticipate prospering under capitalism. But they have made much less headway among the vast majority of working-class Serbs.[5]

Other attempts have been made to manipulate Yugoslavia's political life. With its refineries and electric power stations destroyed, the FRY was in desperate need of fuel in the winter of 1999-2000. Seizing the opportunity, the European Union sent shipments of heating fuel to Serbia—but only to towns that were controlled by the political opposition. The message was clear: those who voted the way the Western capitalists wanted would get humanitarian assistance; the others would be left to freeze under the sanctions. When Yugoslav customs officials held up the first shipment—because the weight of the trucks exceeded the allowable maximum and other such problems—Michael Graham, head of the European Commission's delegation in Belgrade, waxed indignant: “I can only express surprise and disappointment. I see no reason why anybody should wish to delay heating fuel for the citizens of Nis and Pirot.”[6] He conveniently ignored the fact that the EU itself was denying fuel to all the many Serbian

communities that had voted in politically incorrect ways. The Yugoslav government eventually let the shipments go through.

In late 1999, the US government forbade dealings by US citizens with all properties and entities of the FRY (Serbia and Montenegro) and their representatives, both within the country and abroad. The proscribed list included about one thousand businesses, banks, and accounts relating to transportation, scientific laboratories, shipping, and industries of all sorts, along with various government leaders.[7]

Meanwhile, US policy makers were giving every encouragement to Montenegrin secessionism. An independent Montenegro would cut Serbia off from an outlet to the sea. In mid-September 1999, the investigative journalist Diana Johnstone reported that former US ambassador to Croatia, Peter Galbraith—who had backed Tudjman's ethnic cleansing of tens of thousands of Serbian farming families in the Krajina region four years earlier—visited Montenegro to chide opposition politicians for their reluctance to plunge Yugoslavia into more civil war. Such a war would be brief, he assured them, and would "solve all your problems."[8]

Montenegro, Serbia's only remaining partner in the FRY, remained at loggerheads with Belgrade since pro-Western Milo Djukanovic became president in 1997. The Montenegrin leadership threatened to declare independence if Milosevic did not grant still greater autonomy within their joint federation.[9] The Montenegrin republic passed a law claiming ownership over airports in Podgorica and Tivat, normally Yugoslav federal property. The move might be compared to New York State claiming ownership of JFK airport, or the province of Ontario declaring the Toronto airport its own rather than Canada's. In response, Yugoslav military moved in and retook control of at least one of the airports.[10]

Will Montenegro host the next Balkan war? US News and World Report learned that in October 1999 NATO's top general Wesley Clark asked his bosses at the Pentagon for approval to start planning for possible NATO military action in Yugoslavia's junior republic. Clark was concerned that President Milosevic, alarmed at the growing prospect of independence for Montenegro, would order a military crackdown.[11] If the FRY actually did

dare to defend its shrunken sovereignty and resist NATO's campaign of destabilization and dismemberment, then the NATO batterers would once more escalate their efforts.

Whatever new wars were in the offing, old ones had not been put to rest. In February and March 2000, ethnic Albanian fighters, some identified as KLA, began crossing over from Kosovo into southern Serbia. They wore uniforms looking much like the officially disbanded KLA, except that their shoulder patches read "Liberation Army of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medveda," referring to three towns just east of the Kosovo border in Serbia whose populations were about 80 per cent Albanian. The FRY feared that these places wanted to break away and join Kosovo. "Western officials and ethnic Albanians agree that Belgrade's anxieties are not imaginary," reported the *Washington Post*. "Smugglers began bringing significant quantities of arms into the three towns from Kosovo six months ago, they say, and fighters have been trickling in ever since."[12]

Developments on the border appeared to be a replay of the Kosovo conflict itself. Rebels bombed police stations and public buildings in Presevo, Bujanovac, and Medveda. Police were killed or wounded in shootouts. Yugoslav police and special forces units conducted aggressive searches for Albanian rebels. There were reports of Serbian mistreatment of suspects. And Western forces began anticipating the time when they might feel "obliged" to intervene. The *Washington Post* quoted a "Western diplomat": "[I]f reports of abuses mount, US and allied troops stationed in Kosovo could be pressured to intervene."[13]

An additional strategy under consideration is to turn over the northern Serbian province of Vojvodina to Hungary. Vojvodina has a rich agricultural base and is considered the breadbasket of Serbia. It also has numerous nationalities including several hundred thousand persons of Hungarian descent most of whom show no sign of wanting to secede, and who are better treated than the larger Hungarian minorities in Romania and Slovakia.[14] Still, the Hungarian press referred to "oppressions" endured by ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina. As early as July 1991, while the crisis was brewing in Slovenia and Croatia, the Hungarian prime minister revealed his irredentist appetite, declaring that the international treaties designating

Hungary’s southern border with Serbia, particularly Vojvodina in 1920, were made only with Yugoslavia. “We gave Vojvodina to Yugoslavia. If there is no more Yugoslavia, then we should get it back.”[15]

A tested method of destabilization is political assassination. On February 7 2000, Yugoslav Defense Minister Pavle Bulatovic was gunned down in a Belgrade restaurant. Bulatovic was a leader of the Montenegro Socialist People’s Party, which wants Montenegro to remain part of Yugoslavia. The assassination sent a threatening message to all anti-secessionist Montenegrins. Between 1997 and early 2000, at least a dozen Yugoslav officials were assassinated—mostly members of the Yugoslav United Left or the Serbian Socialist Party—in what resembled a concerted covert action to subvert the Yugoslav government. Four months before Bulatovic’s murder, Yugoslav Information Minister Goran Matic had warned that “subversive and terrorist actions are being planned abroad in order to destabilize the country's political and economic system,” and that Washington's policy would “increasingly rely on destructive and illegal activities” working through “an existing network of secret agents.”[16]

US news media never once entertained the possibility that the assassinations in Yugoslavia were being orchestrated from the West. Instead, they suggested that the victims were involved in criminal activity, or that the Milosevic government itself had suddenly taken to murdering its own loyal supporters.

The Bulatovic assassination coincided with more obvious bellicose moves by the US toward Eastern Europe and the former USSR. A pro-NATO coup was perpetrated against Ukraine's democratically elected leftish parliament, in order to install what amounted to a pro-capitalist presidential dictatorship in that country. Meanwhile, the State Department openly reaffirmed its support for anti-government forces in the unreconstructed former Soviet republic of Belarus. The Pentagon (a) continued its bombings of Iraq every few days, (b) revived its “Star Wars” outer-space ballistic missile program, and (c) announced plans for NATO military exercises in Ukraine, Bulgaria and Estonia.[17]

One troubling fact for the NATO nations has been that the Serbs continue to refuse to roll over. For all the outside funding they receive, and all their demonstrations against the government, the cluster of “democratic opposition” parties, the Zajedno (“Together") coalition was able to muster only 22 out of 138 seats in the Yugoslav parliamentary elections of 1996 compared to the clear majority of 84 seats won by Milosevic's Socialist-led coalition. Pro-government demonstrations are usually two to three times larger than the ones orchestrated by Zajedno. Even the *Wall Street Journal* admitted that polls showed Milosevic to be more popular than all opposition candidates combined.[18]

“Most observers agree,” writes Lituchy, “that the leaders of Zajedno possess neither the political support, credibility or even ability to ever form a government. They are capable of plunging the country into chaos, however, and that now appears to be their main goal.”[19] One Zajedno leader is quoted in the *New York Times* as admitting that “power cannot be won by elections but only by uprisings, strikes [and] violence,” and the real purpose of protest demonstrations was “to reform the economy and push Yugoslavia into Western Europe.”[20]

As of late winter 2000, the Yugoslavs were doing their best to survive despite every hardship. Electricity was rationed with rotating brownouts. Bridges were being rebuilt (but not across the Danube) and one auto factory was actually back in production. There was more fuel on the market, and bread and electricity prices remained stable.[21] It was clear that the Milosevic government was not handing the country over to the tender mercies of the free market but was rationing supplies and mobilizing scarce resources in an equitable manner, and doing a fair job of managing the crisis. Diana Johnstone reported from Belgrade that “there are fewer beggars on the streets of Belgrade than in any other city in Europe.”[22]

Whether or not conditions improve, US leaders will continue to treat the democratically elected FRY government as a dictatorship because it does not promote the free-market government that US leaders demand. So the campaign to sabotage, assassinate, destabilize, and attack will continue—unless popular forces in the United States and abroad can mobilize and make such aggressions politically too costly.

On rare occasions capitalist states have helped the populations of other states, specifically when the welfare of those populations are a key consideration in the struggle against another powerful enemy. So in the early post-war era, US policy makers put forth a Marshall plan and grudgingly accepted reforms that benefited the working classes in Western Europe. They did this because of the Cold War competition with the Soviet Union and the strong showing of Communist parties in Western European countries.[23] But today there is no competing lure; hence, the well-being of the Yugoslav people is not a consideration except as something to be negated.

David North points to what he sees as “an obvious and undeniable connection between the collapse of the Soviet Union and the arrogance and brutality with which the United States has pursued its international agenda throughout the 1990s.” Many members of the US ruling elite “have convinced themselves that the absence of any substantial international opponent capable of resisting the United States offers an historically unprecedented opportunity to establish, through the use of military power, an unchallengeable position of global dominance.” Earlier dreams of a US global hegemony, an “American century,” were frustrated by the constraints imposed by a competing superpower. But today, policy makers in Washington and in academic think tanks all over the country are arguing that overwhelming and unanswerable military superiority will establish US global domination, and “remove all barriers to the reorganization of the world economy on the basis of market principles, as interpreted and dominated by American transnational corporations.”[24]

I departed from Yugoslavia in August 1999 on a van that traveled all night to Budapest. Riding with me was a Serbian yuppie: a young broker who worked via computer with the New York Stock Exchange. He was of the opinion that Milosevic was not a war criminal but still should hand himself over to the International Criminal Tribunal, just so the rest of the country might get some peace (as if having Milosevic's head would cause Western leaders to leave Yugoslavia in peace). He went on to tell me what a wonderful place Belgrade was to live in, with its remarkable abundance of

beautiful women and its low prices. The ample income he made went twice as far in the economically depressed city. His comments reminded me that hard times are not hard for everyone, especially not for people with money.

The van made an additional stop in Belgrade to pick up an attractive but unhappy-looking young woman who, once seated, began crying as she told us that she was going to Spain for a long and indefinite period, leaving home and family because things were so difficult in Yugoslavia. War victimizes all sorts of people who are never included in the final toll. It was not long before the stockbroker, displaying a most sympathetic demeanor, was making his moves on the young lady, as if encircling a prey. Again, I was reminded that hard times for the many bring new opportunities for the privileged few.

Notes

Chapter 1 Hypocritical Humanitarianism

1. For a fuller exposition of US involvement in Third World repression, see my Against Empire (San Francisco, 1995).

2. Kevin McKieman, “Turkey’s War on the Kurds,” Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, March/April 1999, 26-37.

3. Ibid., 29.

4. Joan Phillips, “Bloody Liberals,” Living Marxism, September 1993, 20.

5. Ibid., 20.

6. On the falsity of treating Serbian rule in Kosovo as a moral equivalent to the Nazi genocide perpetrated against the Jews, see the excellent article by John Rosenthal, “Kosovo and 'the Jewish Question’,” Monthly Review, February 2000, 24-42.

7. David North, “After the Slaughter: Political Lessons of the Balkan War,” World Socialist Web site www.wsws.org, June 14, 1999.

8. Ibid.

Chapter 2 Third Worldization

1. R. K. Kent, “An Open Letter to the Ten Members of the Foreign Relations Committee for Europe,” US Senate, August 12, 1999, unpublished copy.

2. Misha Glenny, The Fall of Yugoslavia (London/New York, 1992) 42.

3. The Yugoslav foreign debt, which stood at $2 billion in 1970, climbed to $6 billion in 1975, and skyrocketed to $20 billion in 1980, representing a quarter of national income, with debt servicing consuming some 20 per cent of export earnings.

4. World Bank, Industrial Restructuring Study, Overview, Washington, DC, June 1991.

5. Michel Chossudovsky, “Banking on the Balkans,” TH/S, July /August 1999, and Chossudovsky’s “Dismantling Former Yugoslavia, Recolonizing Bosnia,” CovertAction Quaterly, Spring 1996.

6. Chossudovsky makes this point, as does Susan L. Woodward, Balkan Tragedy (Washington, DC, 1995), 47-81.

7. Chossudovsky, “Banking on the Balkans.”

8. Sean Gervasi, “Germany, US and the Yugoslav Crisis,” CovertAction Quarterly, Winter 1992-93, and Chossudovsky, “Dismantling Former Yugoslavia, Recolonizing Bosnia.”

9. See Fred Gaboury’s report in People’s Weekly World, June 13 1999.

10. Notes from my trip to Yugoslavia, August 1999. See also the article on my Yugoslavia sojourn on my Web site, www.michaelparenti.org.

Chapter 3 Divide and Conquer

1. Joan Phillips, “Breaking the Selective Silence,” Living Marxism, April 1993, p.10. Indeed, almost all the books dealing with the Balkan crisis downplay or completely ignore the secessionist role played by the West. One worthwhile exception is Woodward’s, Balkan Tragedy.

2. Glenny, The Fall of Yugoslavia, 19 and 24.

3. Peter Gowan, “The NATO Powers and the Balkan Tragedy,” New Left Review, no.234, March/April 1999, 94.

4. Gervasi, “Germany, US and the Yugoslav Crisis,” 41-42.

5. Woodward, Balkan Tragedy, 111-112.

6. Michael Parenti, “NATO’s 'Humanitarian War’: Notes of the Aftermath,” Humanist, March/April 2000, 14.

7. Gregory Elich, CovertAction Quarterly, Fall/Winter 1999 (inside covers).

8. Woodward, Balkan Tragedy, 141-142, 173.

9. Ibid., 143-144.

10. Gregory Elich, “The Invasion of Serbian Krajina,” NATO in the Balkans (New York, 1998), 131-132.

11. Independent, August6 1995, quoted by Sara Flounders, “Bosnia Tragedy: The Unknown Role of the Pentagon,” NATO in the Balkans, 64.

12. Gowan, “The NATO Powers and the Balkan Tragedy,” 94-95.

13. Glenny, The Fall of Yugoslavia, 124.

14. Los Angeles Times, November 11 1997.

15. Charles G. Boyd, “Making Peace with the Guilty: The Truth about Bosnia,” Foreign Affairs, September/October 1995.

16. Kent, “An Open Letter to the Ten Members of the Foreign Relations Committee for Europe.

17. Boyd, “Making Peace with the Guilty: The Truth about Bosnia.”

18. Diana Johnstone, “To Use a War,” CovertAction Quarterly, Winter 1999, 51.

19. Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, “America and Bosnia,” National Interest, Fall 1993, 16-17.

20. Ibid., 17-18.

21. For more readings on the stratagems preceding the NATO bombing, see the collection of reports by Ramsey Clark, Sean Gervasi, Sara Flounders, Barry Lituchy, Nadja Tesich, Michel Chussudovsky, and others in NATO in the Balkans.

22. John Mueller and Karl Mueller, “Sanctions of Mass Destruction,” Foreign Affairs, May 1999.

23. Woodward, Balkan Tragedy, 18.

Chapter 4 Slovenia: Somewhat Out of Step

1. Economist, November2 1996 and July 31 1999; Time International, March 22 1999.

2. The two quotes in that sentence are from the Economist, June6 1998 and November2 1996 respectively.

3. *Wall Street Journal*, June1 1998; and Economist, June6 1998 and July 31 1999.

4. Time International, March 22 1999.

5. Christian Science Monitor, June 11 1999.

6. Observations by Balkans expert Barry Lituchy, in conversation with me, January 13 2000.

Chapter 5 Croatia: New Republic, Old Reactionaries

1. Dorothea Razumovsky, “God Willing!” in Klaus Bittermann (ed.), Serbia Must Die: Truth and Lies in the Yugoslav Civil War (Berlin, 1994), 85-86. After the war, the Yugoslav government charged Cardinal Stepinac with being an active Nazi collaborator. He was hailed in the US press, of course, as an innocent victim of Communist oppression. Pope John Paul II beatified the late Stepinac, who is now slated for sainthood.

2. For a full account of the horrors of the Croatian fascist contributions to the Holocaust, see Edmond Paris, Genocide in Satellite Croatia, 1941-1945 (Chicago, 1961), 9. During this period, some 200,000 Orthodox Christian Serbs were forcibly converted to Roman Catholicism. Some Roma scholars put the number of Roma victims as high as 100,000 in and around Croatia.

3. Ibid., 259.

4. Jasenovic Research Institute, press release #4: Announcement of Lawsuit against Vatican Bank et al., February3 2000.

5. Paris, Genocide in Satellite Croatia, 1941-1945, 259-261 and passim; also Alfred Lipson, “The Roots of Ethnic Violence and Civil War in Yugoslavia,” Together, December 1991.

6. Financial Times (London), April 15 1993; Yigal Chazan, “Serbian Women Gang-Raped by Their Croat Neighbours, Guardian (London), August 17 1992; Raymond Bonner, “War Crimes Panel Finds Croat Troops 'Cleansed’ the Serbs,” *New York Times*, March 21 1999.

7. Raymond Bonner, *New York Times*, March3 1999 and “War Crimes Panel”.

8. *New York Times*, October 31 1993.

9. Slavenka Drakulic, “Croatia Puts Itself on Trial,” *New York Times*, March 16 1999, Op-ed; Peter Brock, “Dateline Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press,” in Bittermann (ed.), Serbia Must Die, 24; Paris, Genocide in Satellite Croatia, 1941-1945, passim.

10. Elich, “The Invasion of Serbian Krajina,” 135.

11. *New York Times*, October 31 1993.

12. Ibid.

13. Times (London), April 11 1995, cited by Elich, “The Invasion of Serbian Krajina,” 136.

14. Drakulic, “Croatia Puts Itself on Trial.”

15. Bonner, *New York Times*, March3 1999.

16. Woodward, Balkan Tragedy, 231.

17. Milton R. Copulos, “Yugoslavia, Context of a Crisis,” Special Report of the National Defense Council Foundation (Alexandria, VA), January 1992; Copulos, “Fears of Anti-Semitism as Croatian Nationalists Increase their Influence,” Jerusalem Post, December 30 1990; Glenny, The Fall of Yugoslavia, 14.

18. Bonner, *New York Times*, March3 1999.

19. *New York Times*, December 12 1999.

20. *New York Times*, December 12 1999 and March3 1999.

21. Alice Mahon, “Report on the Conditions of Serbs in Croatia,” www.emperors-clothes.com, posted December 21 1999.

22. Michel Chossudovsky, “Banking on the Balkans.”

23. Los Angeles Times, January4 2000.

Chapter 6 Bosnia: New Colonies

1. See David Chandler, Faking Democracy after Dayton (London, 1999).

2. To be sure, there were many Muslims, along with Croatians and others, who had opposed Nazi rule. But it was the Serbs who were the backbone of the Yugoslav resistance, waging one of the most militant and successful wartime anti-fascist partisan campaigns in Europe. Once they found themselves cast as a pariah people destined for the death camps, Serbs of various political persuasions, like the Jews, opposed fascist rule as a matter of survival. However, conservative and monarchist Serbian units, known as the Chetniks, while resisting the Nazi occupation at first, took to murdering Communists and Muslim civilians, and even actively cooperated with the Nazis and Italian fascists against Tito's Communist partisans. (Correspondence from Gregory Elich to me, April3 2000.)

3. Joan Phillips, "The Other Bosnian War," Living Marxism, January 1995, 24-27; correspondence from Gregory Elich to me, April3 2000.

4. Roger Cohen, Hearts Grow Brutal (New York, 1998), 148.

5. Alija Izetbegovic, Between East and West, 3rd ed. (Plainfield, IN, 1993); Diana Johnstone, "Alija Izetbegovic: Islamic Hero of the Western World," CovertAction Quarterly, Winter 1999, 58-61.

6. Johnstone, "To Use a War," 57. Izetbegovic's desire to control the media does perturb Roger Cohen, but apparently not enough to cast any kind of negative judgment on the would-be theocrat.

7. Richard Holbrooke, To End a War (New York, 1998), 97.

8. Ibid., 154.

9. Johnstone, 'To Use a War," 53-54. Milosevic was living under the gun. Recently in a televised interview on PBS, Holbrooke stated that he had threatened Milosevic with NATO bombings if he did not concede to the terms laid down by the US at Dayton.

10. Michel Chossudovsky, The Globalization of Poverty (London, 1997), 244-256.

11. James Cairns, “Meanwhile in Bosnia,” Christian Century, July 14 1999, 702ff; Lancet, December 18 1999.

12. Dnevi Avaz (Sarajevo), October7 1997, cited in Gregory Elich, “Bringing Democracy to Bosnia-Herzegovina,” CovertAction Quarterly, Spring 2000.

13. “US Threatens Aid Cut,” UPI, November9 1998.

14. Adam Zagorin, “More Losses in Bosnia; This Time It's Aid,” Time, September 20 1999, 18.

15. *New York Times*, October 31 1999.

16. Andeja Zivkovic, “Building Peace in the Balkans,” Le Monde Diplomatique, July 1999.

Chapter 7 Republika Srpska: Democracy, NATO Style

1. Elich, “Bringing Democracy to Bosnia-Herzegovina.”

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid, (my italics); See also Colin Soloway, “NATO Forces Seize Police Stations in Bosnian City,” *Washington Post*, August 21 1997.

6. Elich, “Bringing Democracy to Bosnia-Herzegovina.”

7. *New York Times*, October 10 1997.

8. Brooke Shelby Biggs, San Francisco Bay Guardian, May5 1999.

9. Johnstone, “To Use A War,” 54.

10. *New York Times*, March6 1999.

11. Elich, “Bringing Democracy to Bosnia-Herzegovina”; Michael Kelly, “The Clinton Doctrine is a Fraud, and Kosovo Proves It,” Boston Globe, July 1999.

12. Elich, “Bringing Democracy to Bosnia-Herzegovina.”

13. Accounts of the deaths of Korvacevic, Drljaca, and Gagovic are from Elich, “Bringing Democracy to Bosnia-Herzegovina”; and correspondence from Elich to me, January 5 2000.

14. “Bosnia's Serbs,” Economist, March 13 1999, 61.

15. *New York Times*, March6 1999.

16. Elich, “Bringing Democracy to Bosnia-Herzegovina.”

Chapter 8 The Other Atrocities

1. Phillips, “Breaking the Selective Silence,” 10.

2. Bill Mandel, “Spin Doctors at Work in Bosnia War,” San Francisco Examiner, August 14 1992.

3. Yigal Chazan, “Serbian Women Gang-Raped by their Croat Neighbours.”

4. Peter Brock, “Dateline Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press,” in Bittermann (ed.), Serbia Must Die, 19.

5. Dorothea Razumovsky, “God Willing!” 91, and Brock, “Dateline Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press,” 19-20.

6. Phillips, “Breaking the Selective Silence,” 10.

7. Brock, “Dateline Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press,” 34.

8. *New York Times*, August7 1993; Barry Lituchy, “Media Deception and the Yugoslav Civil War,” in NATO in the Balkans, 205; Brock, “Dateline Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press,” 20.

9. *New York Times* (International), October 26 1993.

10. *New York Times* (International), October 28 1993.

11. Ibid.

12. *New York Times* (International), November4 1993.

13. Julian Borger, “EU Report Accuses Croatia of Atrocities Against Rebel Serbs,” Guardian (London), September 30 1995.

14. Barry Lituchy, correspondence, *New York Times*, August2 1996.

15. *New York Times*, March 14, 1996.

16. San Francisco Examiner, April 26, 1999.

17. Robert Fox in the Daily Telegraph (London), quoted in Brock, “Dateline Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press,” 35.

18. Boyd, “Making Peace with the Guilty: The Truth about Bosnia.”

19. Brock, “Dateline Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press,” 35-36.

20. Zeljko Vukovic, “Potemkin’s Sarajevo,” in Serbia Must Die, 160-161.

21. Brock, “Dateline Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press,” 36.

22. Sir Michael Rose, Fighting for Peace (London, 1998), cited in Chronicles Research Team, “The Road to War: The Massacre that Never Was“ in The Kosovo Dossier (London, 1999), 6lfn.

23. For investigations of all three incidents challenging the official version, see Leonard Doyle, “Muslims ‘Slaughter Their Own People,'”

Independent (London), August 22 1994; Charles Bremner, “UN Tracks Source of Fatal Shell,” Times (London), February 19 1994; “Sarajevo Market Mortar Fired from Moslem Camp,” Reuters, February 18 1994; Hugh McManners, “Serbs ‘Not Guilty' of Massacre,” *Sunday Times* (London), October1 1995; David Binder, “Bosnia's Bombers,” *Nation*, October 2 1995; “Russian UN Officer Disputes Serb Guilt for Market Blast,” Agence France-Presse, September2 1995.

24. Rose’s observations reported in David Owen, Balkan Odyssey (London, 1996), 279-280.

25. Ibid., 262.

26. “French Troops Say Bosnians May Be Shooting Their Own Civilians,” *New York Times*, August1 1995; Andrew Borowiec, “Bosnians Stage Sacrifices, Peacekeeping Officer Alleges,” Washington Times, February 21 1995.

27. Mira Beham, “The Media Fan the Flames,” in Serbia Must Die, 113-115.

28. The various testimonies in that paragraph are from Beham, “The Media Fan the Flames,” 113-115.

29. Communication to me from Barry Lituchy, April 10 2000.

30. Woodward, Balkan Tragedy, 235.

31. Christopher Hitchens, Nation, October 18 1999.

32. Glenny, The Fall of Yugoslavia, 136.

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13. David North, “After the Slaughter: Political Lessons of the Balkan War.”

14. For instance, both Noam Chomsky in his comments on KPFA radio, April7 1999, and Alexander Cockbum in the Nation, May 10 1999, found it de rigueur to refer to Serbian “brutality” and the “monstrous” Milosevic” without offering any specifics.

15. Albright, interviewed on “War in Europe, Part I,” Frontline, PBS, February 22 2000.

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2. Alan Budd, Observer (London), June 21 1992, as quoted in Christian Parenti, Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis (London/New York, 1999), 29. Alan Budd was economic advisor to Margaret Thatcher.

3. Parenti, Lockdown America, 40.

Chapter 20 The Aggression Continues

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3. *New York Times*, November7 1999 and remarks by Vojislav Seselj at a press conference I attended in Belgrade, August5 1999. Normally assistance is not provided directly to the political parties but to NGOs that are “assisting the democratic opposition in Serbia,” as a press release from the US Embassy in Belgrade noted, adding that US efforts “are neither hidden nor secret.” (“The United States Openly Supports Democratization in Serbia and Montenegro,” press release from the US Embassy, Office of Public Affairs, Belgrade, January 13 1999.)

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